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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

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CHRISTIAN DE NEUVILLETTE.
COMTE DE GUICHE.
RAGUENEAU.
LE BRET.
Captain CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX.
The Cadets.
LIGNIÈRE.
DE VALVERT.
A Marquis.
Second Marquis.
Third Marquis.
MONTFLEURY.
BELLEROSE.
JODELET.
CUIGY.
BRISSAILLE.
A Bore.
A Musketeer.
Another Musketeer
A Spanish Officer.
A Trooper.
The Porter.
A Burgher.
His Son.
A Pickpocket.
A Spectator.
A Guardsman.
Bertrand the Fifer.
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Two Musicians.
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ACT I

A Representation at the Hotel de Bourgogne.

The hall of the Hotel de Bourgogne, in 1640. *A sort of tennis-court arranged and decorated for a theatrical performance.*

The hall is oblong and seen obliquely, so that one of its sides forms the back of the right foreground, and meeting the left background makes an angle with the stage, which is partly visible.

On both sides of the stage are benches. The curtain is composed of two tapestries which can be drawn aside. Above a harlequin's mantle are the royal arms. There are broad steps from the stage to the hall; on either side of these steps are the places for the violinists. Footlights.

Two rows, one over the other, of side galleries: the highest divided into boxes. No seats in the pit of the hall, which is the real stage of the theatre; at the back of the pit, i.e. *on the right foreground, some benches forming steps, and underneath, a staircase which leads to the upper seats. An improvised buffet ornamented with little lustres, vases, glasses, plates of tarts, cakes, bottles, etc.*

The entrance to the theatre is in the centre of the background, under the gallery of the boxes. A large

door, half open to let in the spectators. On the panels of this door, in different corners, and over the buffet, red placards bearing the words, 'La Clorise.'

At the rising of the curtain the hall is in semi-darkness, and still empty. The lustres are lowered in the middle of the pit ready to be lighted.

SCENE I

The PUBLIC, *arriving by degrees.* TROOPERS, BURGHERS, LACKEYS, PAGES, *a* PICKPOCKET, *the* DOORKEEPER, *etc., followed by the* MARQUISES. CUIGY, BRISSAILLE, *the* BUFFET-GIRL, *the* VIOLINISTS, *etc.*

[*A confusion of loud voices is heard outside the door. A* TROOPER *enters hastily.*]

THE DOORKEEPER

[*following him*].

Hollo! You there! Your money!

THE TROOPER.

I enter gratis.

THE DOORKEEPER.

Why?

THE TROOPER.

Why? I am of the King's Household Cavalry, 'faith!

THE DOORKEEPER

[*to another* TROOPER *who enters*].

And you?

SECOND TROOPER.

I pay nothing!

THE DOORKEEPER.

How so?

SECOND TROOPER.

I am a musketeer.

FIRST TROOPER

[*to the second*].

The play will not begin till two. The pit is empty. Come, a bout with the foils to pass the time!

[*They fence with the foils they have brought.*]

A LACKEY

[*entering*].

Pst . . . Flanquin! . . .

ANOTHER

[*already there*].

Champagne? . . .

THE FIRST

[*showing him cards and dice which he takes from his doublet*].

See, here be cards and dice. [*He seats himself on the floor.*] Let's play.

THE SECOND

[*doing the same*].

Good; I am with you, villain!

FIRST LACKEY

[*taking from his pocket a candle-end, which he lights, and sticks on the floor*].

I made free to provide myself with light at my master's expense!

A GUARDSMAN

[*to a* SHOP-GIRL *who advances*].

'Twas prettily done to come before the lights were lit!

[*He takes her round the waist.*]

ONE OF THE FENCERS

[*receiving a thrust*].

A hit!

ONE OF THE CARD-PLAYERS.

Clubs!

THE GUARDSMAN

[*following the girl*].

A kiss!

THE FLOWER-GIRL

[*struggling to free herself*].

They're looking!

THE GUARDSMAN

[*drawing her to a dark corner*].

No fear! No one can see!

A MAN

[*sitting on the ground with others who have brought their provisions*]

By coming early, one can eat in comfort.

A BURGHER

[*conducting his son*].

Let us sit here, son.

A CARD-PLAYER.

Triple ace !

A MAN

[*taking a bottle from under his cloak, and also seating himself on the floor*].

A tippler may well quaff his Burgundy [*he drinks*] in the Burgundy Hotel !

THE BURGHER

[*to his son*].

'Faith ! A man might think he had fallen in a bad house here ! [*He points with his cane to the drunkard.*] What with topers ! [*one of the fencers, in breaking off, jostles him*] brawlers ! [*he stumbles into the midst of the card-players*] gamblers !

THE GUARDSMAN

[*behind him, still teasing the* FLOWER-GIRL].

Come, one kiss !

THE BURGHER

[*hurriedly pulling his son away*].

By all the holies! And this, my boy, is the theatre where they played Rotrou erewhile.

THE YOUNG MAN.

Ay, - and Corneille!

A TROOP OF PAGES

[*hand in hand, enter dancing the farandole, and singing*].

Tra' a la, la, la, la, la, la, la, lère . . .

THE DOORKEEPER

[*sternly, to the* PAGES].

You pages there, none of your tricks! . . .

FIRST PAGE

[*with an air of wounded dignity*].

O sir!--such a suspicion! . . . [*Briskly, to the* SECOND PAGE, *the moment the* DOORKEEPER'S *back is turned.*] Have you string?

THE SECOND.

Ay, and a fish-hook with it.

FIRST PAGE.

We can angle for wigs, then, up there i' th' gallery.

A PICKPOCKET

[*gathering about him some evil-looking youths*].

Hark ye, young cut-purses, lend an ear, while I give you your first lesson in thieving.

SECOND PAGE

[*calling up to others in the top galleries*].

You there! Have you peashooters?

THIRD PAGE

[*from above*].

Ay have we, and peas withal!

[*He blows, and peppers them with peas.*]

THE YOUNG MAN

[*to his father*].

What piece do they give us?

THE BURGHER.

Clorise.

THE YOUNG MAN.

Who may the author be?

THE BURGHER.

Master Balthazar Baro. It is a play! . . .

[*He goes up arm-in-arm with his son.*]

THE PICKPOCKET

[*to his* PUPILS].

Have a care above all of the lace knee-ruffles—cut them off!

A SPECTATOR

[*to another, showing him a corner in the gallery*].

I was up there, the first night of the *Cid.*

THE PICKPOCKET

[*making with his fingers the gesture of filching*].

Thus for watches——

THE BURGHER

[*coming down again with his son*].

Ah! You shall presently see some renowned actors . . .

THE PICKPOCKET

[*making the gestures of one who pulls something stealthily, with little jerks*].

Thus for handkerchiefs——

THE BURGHER.

Montfleury . . .

SOME ONE

[*shouting from the upper gallery*].

Light up, below there!

THE BURGHER.

. . . Bellerose, l'Epy, La Beaupré, Jodelet!

A PAGE

[*in the pit*].

Here comes the buffet-girl!

THE BUFFET-GIRL

[*taking her place behind the buffet*].

Oranges, milk, raspberry-water, cedar bitters! . .

[*A hubbub outside the door is heard.*]

A FALSETTO VOICE.

Make place, brutes!

A LACKEY

[*astonished*].

The Marquises!—in the pit? . . .

ANOTHER LACKEY.

Oh! only for a minute or two!

[*Enter a band of young* MARQUISES.]

A MARQUIS

[*seeing that the hall is half-empty*].

What now! So we make our entrance like a pack of woollen-drapers! Peaceably, without disturbing the folk, or treading on their toes!—Oh fie! fie!

[*Recognising some other gentlemen who have entered a little before him.*]

Cuigy! Brissaille!

[*Greetings and embraces.*]

CUIGY.

True to our word! . . . Troth, we are here before the candles are lit.

THE MARQUIS.

Ay, indeed! Enough! I am of an ill humour . . .

ANOTHER.

Nay, nay, Marquis! see, for your consolation, they are coming to light up!

ALL THE AUDIENCE

[*welcoming the entrance of the lighter*].

Ah! . . .

[*They form in groups round the lustres as they*

are lit. Some people have taken their seats in the galleries. LIGNIÈRE, *a distinguished-looking* roué, *with disordered shirt-front, arm-in-arm with* CHRISTIAN DE NEUVILLETTE. CHRISTIAN, *who is dressed elegantly, but rather behind the fashion, seems preoccupied, and keeps looking at the boxes.*]

SCENE II

The SAME. CHRISTIAN, LIGNIÈRE, *then* RAGUENEAU *and* LE BRET.

CUIGY.

Lignière!

BRISSAILLE

[*laughing*].

Not drunk as yet?

LIGNIÈRE

[*aside, to* CHRISTIAN].

I may introduce you? [CHRISTIAN *nods in assent.*] Baron de Neuvillette. [*Bows.*]

THE AUDIENCE

[*applauding as the first lustre is lighted and drawn up*].

Ah!

CUIGY

[*to* BRISSAILLE, *looking at* CHRISTIAN].

'Tis a pretty fellow!

FIRST MARQUIS

[*who has overheard*]

Pooh !

LIGNIÈRE

[*introducing them to* CHRISTIAN].

My lords De Cuigy . . . De Brissaille . . .

CHRISTIAN

[*bowing*].

Delighted ! . .

FIRST MARQUIS

[*to* SECOND].

He is not ill to look at, but certes, he is not costumed in the latest mode.

LIGNIÈRE

[*to* CUIGY]

This gentleman comes from Touraine.

CHRISTIAN.

Yes, I have scarce been twenty days in Paris; to-morrow I join the Guards, in the Cadets.

FIRST MARQUIS

[*watching the people who are coming into the boxes*].

There is the wife of the Chief-Justice.

THE BUFFET-GIRL.

Oranges, milk . . .

THE VIOLINISTS
[*tuning up*].

La—la—

CUIGY
[*to* CHRISTIAN, *pointing to the hall, which is filling fast*].

'Tis crowded.

CHRISTIAN.

Yes, indeed.

FIRST MARQUIS.

All the great world !

[*They recognise and name the different elegantly dressed ladies who enter the boxes, bowing low to them. The ladies send smiles in answer.*]

SECOND MARQUIS.

Madame de Guéménée.

CUIGY.

Madame de Bois-Dauphin.

FIRST MARQUIS.

Adored by us all !

BRISSAILLE.

Madame de Chavigny . .

SECOND MARQUIS.

Who sports with our poor hearts ! . . .

LIGNIÈRE.

Ha ! so Monsieur de Corneille has come back from Rouen !

THE YOUNG MAN

[*to his father*].

Is the Academy here?

THE BURGHER.

Oh ay—I see several of them. There is Boudu, Boissat, and Cureau de la Chambre, Porchères, Colomby, Bourzeys, Bourdon, Arbaud . . . all names that will live! 'Tis fine!

FIRST MARQUIS.

Attention! Here come our *précieuses*; Barthénoide, Urimédonte, Cassandace, Félixerie. . . .

SECOND MARQUIS.

Ah! How exquisite their fancy names are! Do you know them all, Marquis?

FIRST MARQUIS.

Ay, Marquis, I do, every one!

LIGNIÈRE

[*drawing* CHRISTIAN *aside.*]

Friend, I but came here to give you pleasure. The lady comes not. I will betake me again to my pet vice.

CHRISTIAN

[*persuasively*].

No, no! You, who are ballad-maker to Court and City alike, can tell me better than any who the lady is for whom I die of love. Stay yet a while.

THE FIRST VIOLIN

[*striking his bow on the desk*].

Gentlemen violinists!

[*He raises his bow.*]

THE BUFFET-GIRL

Macaroons, lemon-drink . . .

[*The violins begin to play.*]

CHRISTIAN.

Ah! I fear me she is coquettish, and over nice and fastidious! I, who am so poor of wit, how dare I speak to her—how address her? This language that they speak to-day—ay, and write—confounds me; I am but an honest soldier, and timid withal. She has ever her place, there, on the right—the empty box, see you!

LIGNIÈRE

[*making as if to go*].

I must go.

CHRISTIAN

[*detaining him*].

Nay, stay.

LIGNIÈRE.

I cannot. D'Assoucy waits me at the tavern, and here one dies of thirst.

THE BUFFET-GIRL

[*passing before him with a tray*].

Orange drink?

LIGNIÈRE.

Ugh !

THE BUFFET-GIRL.

Milk ?

LIGNIÈRE.

Pah !

THE BUFFET-GIRL.

Rivesalte ?

LIGNIÈRE.

Stay. [*To* CHRISTIAN.] I will remain a while — Let me taste this rivesalte.

[*He sits by the buffet ; the girl pours some out for him.*]

CRIES

[*from all the audience, at the entrance of a plump little man, joyously excited*].

Ah ! Ragueneau !

LIGNIÈRE

[*to* CHRISTIAN].

'Tis the famous tavern-keeper Ragueneau.

RAGUENEAU

[*dressed in the Sunday clothes of a pastry-cook, going up quickly to* LIGNIÈRE].

Sir, have you seen Monsieur de Cyrano ?

LIGNIÈRE

[*introducing him to* CHRISTIAN].

The pastrycook of the actors and the poets !

RAGUENEAU

[*overcome*].

You do me too great honour . . .

LIGNIÈRE.

Nay, hold your peace, Mæcenas that you are!

RAGUENEAU.

True, these gentlemen employ me . . .

LIGNIÈRE.

On credit!

He is himself a poet of a pretty talent . . .

RAGUENEAU.

So they tell me.

LIGNIÈRE.

—Mad after poetry!

RAGUENEAU.

'Tis true that, for a little ode . . .

LIGNIÈRE.

You give a tart . . .

RAGUENEAU.

Oh!—a tartlet!

LIGNIÈRE.

Brave fellow! he would fain excuse himself!

—And for a triolet, now, did you not give in exchange . . .

RAGUENEAU.

Some little rolls !

LIGNIÈRE.

[*severely*].

They were milk-rolls !—And as for the theatre, which you love ?

RAGUENEAU.

Oh ! to distraction !

LIGNIÈRE.

How pay you your tickets, ha ?—with cakes. Your place, to-night, come tell me in my ear, what did it cost you ?

RAGUENEAU.

Four custards, and fifteen cream-puffs.

[*He looks round on all sides.*]

Monsieur de Cyrano is not here ? 'Tis strange.

LIGNIÈRE.

Why so ?

RAGUENEAU.

Montfleury plays !

LIGNIÈRE.

Ay, 'tis true that that old wine-barrel is to take *Phœdon*'s part to night, but what matter is that to Cyrano ?

RAGUENEAU.

How ? Know you not ? He has got a hot hate

for Montfleury, and so!——has forbid him strictly to show his face on the stage for one whole month.

LIGNIÈRE

[*drinking his fourth glass*].

Well?

RAGUENEAU.

Montfleury will play!

CUIGY.

He cannot hinder that.

RAGUENEAU.

Oh! oh! that I have come to see!

FIRST MARQUIS.

Who is this Cyrano?

CUIGY.

A fellow well skilled in all tricks of fence.

SECOND MARQUIS.

Is he of noble birth?

CUIGY.

Ay, noble enough. He is a cadet in the Guards.

[*Pointing to a gentleman who is going up and down the hall as if searching for some one.*]

But 'tis his friend Le Bret, yonder, who can best tell you. [*He calls him.*] Le Bret!

[LE BRET *comes towards them.*]

Seek you for De Bergerac?

LE BRET.

Ay ; I am uneasy . . .

CUIGY.

Is it not true that he is the strangest of men ?

LE BRET

[*tenderly*].

True, that he is the choicest of earthly beings !

RAGUENEAU.

Poet !

CUIGY.

Soldier !

BRISSAILLE.

Philosopher !

LE BRET.

Musician !

LIGNIÈRE.

And of how fantastic a presence !

RAGUENEAU.

Marry, 'twould puzzle even our grim painter Philippe de Champaigne to portray him ! Methinks, whimsical, wild, comical as he is, only Jacques Callot, now dead and gone, had succeeded better, and had made of him the maddest fighter of all his visored crew,—with his triple-plumed beaver and six-pointed doublet,—the sword-point sticking up 'neath his mantle like an insolent cocktail ! He's prouder than all the fierce Artabans of whom Gascony has ever

been and will ever be the prolific Alma Mater! Above his Toby ruff he carries a nose!—ah, good my lords, what a nose is his! When one sees it one is fain to cry aloud, 'Nay! 'tis too much! He plays a joke on us!' Then one laughs, says, 'He will anon take it off.' But no!—Monsieur de Bergerac always keeps it on.

LE BRET

[*throwing back his head.*]

He keeps it on,– and cleaves in two any man who dares remark on it!

RAGUENEAU

[*proudly*].

His sword—'tis one half of the Fates' shears!

FIRST MARQUIS

[*shrugging his shoulders*].

He will not come!

RAGUENEAU.

I say he will! and I wager a fowl—*à la Rayue-*

THE MARQUIS

[*laughing*].

Good!

[*Murmurs of admiration in the hall.* ROXANE *has just appeared in her box. She seats herself in front, the duenna at the back.* CHRISTIAN, *who is paying the* BUFFET-GIRL, *does not see her entrance.*]

SECOND MARQUIS

[*with little cries of joy*].

Ah, gentlemen! she is fearfully—terribly—ravishing!

FIRST MARQUIS.

When one looks at her one thinks of a peach smiling at a strawberry!

SECOND MARQUIS.

And what freshness! A man approaching her too near might chance to get a bad chill at the heart?

CHRISTIAN

[*raising his head, sees* ROXANE, *and catches* LIGNIÈRE *by the arm*].

'Tis she!

LIGNIÈRE.

Ah! is it she?

CHRISTIAN.

Ay, tell me quick,—I am afraid.

LIGNIÈRE

[*tasting his rivesalte in sips*].

Magdaleine Robin—Roxane, so called! A subtle wit—a *précieuse.*

CHRISTIAN.

Woe is me!

LIGNIÈRE.

Free. An orphan. The cousin of Cyrano, of whom we were now speaking.

[*At this moment an elegant nobleman, with blue ribbon across his breast, enters the box, and talks with* ROXANE *standing*].

CHRISTIAN

[*starting*].

Who is yonder man?

LIGNIÈRE

[*who is becoming tipsy, winking at him*].

Ha! ha! Count de Guiche. Enamoured of her. But wedded to the niece of Armand de Richelieu. Would fain marry Roxane to a certain sorry fellow, one Monsieur de Valvert, a viscount—and—accommodating! She will none of that bargain; but De Guiche is powerful, and can persecute the daughter of a plain untitled gentleman. More by token, I myself have exposed this cunning plan of his to the world, in a song which . . . Ho! he must rage at me! The end hit home. . . . Listen!

[*He gets up staggering, and raises his glass, ready to sing*]

CHRISTIAN.

No. Good night.

LIGNIÈRE.

Where go you?

CHRISTIAN.

To Monsieur de Valvert!

LIGNIÈRE.

Have a care! It is he who will kill you [*showing him* ROXANE *by a look*]. Stay where you are—she is looking at you.

CHRISTIAN.

It is true!

[*He stands looking at her. The group of pick-pockets, seeing him thus, head in air and open-mouthed, draw near to him.*]

LIGNIÈRE.

'Tis I who am going. I am athirst! And they expect me—in the taverns!

[*He goes out, reeling.*]

LE BRET

[*who has been all round the hall, coming back to* RAGUENEAU *reassured*].

No sign of Cyrano.

RAGUENEAU

[*incredulously*].

All the same . . .

LE BRET.

A hope is left to me—that he has not seen the playbill!

THE AUDIENCE.

Begin, begin!

SCENE III

The SAME, *all but* LIGNIÈRE. DE GUICHE, VALVERT, *then* MONTFLEURY.

A MARQUIS

[*watching* DE GUICHE, *who comes down from* ROXANE'S *box, and crosses the pit surrounded by obsequious noblemen, amongst them the* VICOMTE DE VALVERT].

He pays a fine court, your De Guiche!

ANOTHER.

Faugh! . . . Another Gascon!

THE FIRST.

Ay, but the cold, supple Gascon—that is the stuff success is made of! Believe me, we were best make our bow to him.

[*They go towards* DE GUICHE.]

SECOND MARQUIS.

What fine ribbons! How call you the colour, Count de Guiche? *Kiss me, my darling,* or *Timid Fawn*?

DE GUICHE.

'Tis the colour called *Sick Spaniard.*

FIRST MARQUIS.

'Faith! The colour speaks truth, for, thanks to your valour, things will soon go ill for Spain in Flanders.

DE GUICHE.

I go on the stage! Will you come?

[*He goes towards the stage, followed by the* MARQUISES *and gentlemen. Turning, he calls*]

Come you, Valvert!

CHRISTIAN

[*who is watching and listening, starts on hearing this name*].

The Viscount! Ah! I will throw full in his face my . . .

[*He puts his hand in his pocket, and finds there the hand of a pickpocket who is about to rob him. He turns round*].

Hey?

THE PICKPOCKET.

Oh!

CHRISTIAN

[*holding him tightly*].

I was looking for a glove.

THE PICKPOCKET

[*smiling piteously*].

And you find a hand. [*Changing his tone, quickly, and in a whisper.*] Let me but go, and I will deliver you a secret.

CHRISTIAN

[*still holding him*].

What is it?

THE PICKPOCKET.

Lignière . . . he who has just left you . . .

CHRISTIAN

[*same play*].

Well?

THE PICKPOCKET.

His life is in peril. A song writ by him has given offence in high places—and a hundred men—I am of them—are posted to-night . . .

CHRISTIAN.

A hundred men! By whom posted?

THE PICKPOCKET.

I may not say—a secret . . .

CHRISTIAN

[*shrugging his shoulders*].

Oh!

THE PICKPOCKET

[*with great dignity*].

. . . Of the profession.

CHRISTIAN.

Where are they posted?

THE PICKPOCKET.

At the Porte de Nesle. On his way homeward. Warn him.

CHRISTIAN

[*letting go his wrists*].

But where can I find him?

THE PICKPOCKET.

Run round to all the taverns—*The Golden Wine Press*, *The Pine Cone*, *The Belt that Bursts*, *The Two Torches*, *The Three Funnels*, and at each leave a word that shall put him on his guard.

CHRISTIAN.

Good—I fly! Ah, the scoundrels! A hundred men 'gainst one! [*Looking lovingly at* ROXANE.] Ah, to leave her! . . . [*looking with rage at* VALVERT] and him! . . . But save Lignière I must!

[*He hurries out.* DE GUICHE, *the* VISCOUNT, *the* MARQUISES, *have all disappeared behind the curtain to take their places on the benches placed on the stage. The pit is quite full; the galleries and boxes are also crowded.*]

THE AUDIENCE.

Begin!

A BURGHER

[*whose wig is drawn up on the end of a string by a* PAGE *in the upper gallery*].

My wig!

CRIES OF DELIGHT.

He is bald! Bravo, pages—ha! ha! ha! . . .

THE BURGHER

[*furious, shaking his fist*].

Young villain!

LAUGHTER AND CRIES

[*beginning very loud, and dying gradually away*].

Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!

[*Total silence.*]

LE BRET

[*astonished*].

What means this sudden silence?... [A SPECTATOR *says something to him in a low voice.*] Is't true?

THE SPECTATOR.

I have just heard it on good authority.

MURMURS

[*spreading through the hall*].

Hush! Is it he? No! Ay, I say! In the box with the bars in front! The Cardinal! The Cardinal! The Cardinal!

A PAGE.

The devil! We shall have to behave ourselves! . . .

[*A knock is heard upon the stage. Every one is motionless. A pause.*]

THE VOICE OF A MARQUIS

[*in the silence, behind the curtain.*]

Snuff that candle!

ANOTHER MARQUIS

[*putting his head through the opening in the curtain*].

A chair!

[*A chair is passed from hand to hand, over the heads of the spectators. The* MARQUIS *takes it and disappears, after blowing some kisses to the boxes.*]

A SPECTATOR.

Silence!

[*Three knocks are heard on the stage. The curtain opens in the centre. Tableau. The* MARQUISES *in insolent attitudes seated on each side of the stage. The scene represents a pastoral landscape. Four little lustres light the stage; the violins play softly.*]

LE BRET

[*in a low voice to* RAGUENEAU].

Montfleury comes on the scene?

RAGUENEAU

[*also in a low voice*].

Ay, 'tis he who begins.

LE BRET.

Cyrano is not here.

RAGUENEAU.

I have lost my wager.

LE BRET.

'Tis all the better!

[*An air on the drone-pipes is heard, and* MONTFLEURY *enters, enormously stout, in an Arcadian shepherd's dress, a hat wreathed with roses drooping over one ear, blowing into a ribboned drone-pipe.*]

THE PIT

[*applauding*].

Bravo, Montfleury! Montfleury!

MONTFLEURY

[*after bowing low, begins the part of Phœdon*].

'Heureux qui loin des cours, dans un lieu solitaire,
Se prescrit à soi-même un exil volontaire,
Et qui, lorsque Zéphire a soufflé sur les bois . . .'

A VOICE

[*from the middle of the pit*].

Villain! Did I not forbid you to show your face here for a month?

[*General stupor. Every one turns round. Murmurs.*]

DIFFERENT VOICES.

Hey ?—What ?—What is 't ? . . .

[*The people stand up in the boxes to look.*]

CUIGY.

'Tis he !

LE BRET

[*terrified*].

Cyrano !

THE VOICE.

King of clowns ! Leave the stage this instant !

ALL THE AUDIENCE

[*indignantly*].

Oh !

MONTFLEURY.

But . . .

THE VOICE.

Do you dare defy me ?

DIFFERENT VOICES

[*from the pit and the boxes*].

Peace ! Enough !—Play on, Montfleury — fear nothing !

MONTFLEURY

[*in a trembling voice*].

' Heureux qui loin des cours, dans un lieu sol——

THE VOICE

[*more fiercely*].

Well ! Chief of all the blackguards, must I come and give you a taste of my cane ?

[*A hand holding a cane starts up over the heads of the spectators.*]

MONTFLEURY

[*in a voice that trembles more and more*].

Heureux qui . . .'

[*The cane is shaken.*]

THE VOICE.

Off the stage!

THE PIT.

Oh!

MONTFLEURY

[*choking*].

'Heureux qui loin des cours . . .'

CYRANO

[*appearing suddenly in the pit, standing on a chair, his arms crossed, his beaver cocked fiercely, his moustache bristling, his nose terrible to see*].

Ah! I shall be angry in a moment! . . .

[*Sensation.*]

SCENE IV

The SAME. CYRANO, *then* BELLEROSE, JODELOT.

MONTFLEURY

[*to the* MARQUISES].

Come to my help, my lords!

A MARQUIS

[*carelessly*].

Go on! Go on!

CYRANO.

Fat man, take warning! If you go on, I
Shall feel myself constrained to cuff your face!

THE MARQUIS.

Have done!

CYRANO.

And if these lords hold not their tongue
Shall feel constrained to make them taste my cane!

ALL THE MARQUISES

[*rising*].

Enough! . . . Montfleury . . .

CYRANO.

If he goes not quick
I will cut off his ears and slit him up!

A VOICE.

But . . .

CYRANO.

Out he goes!

ANOTHER VOICE.

Yet . . .

CYRANO.

Is he not gone yet?

[*He makes the gesture of turning up his cuffs.*]

Good! I shall mount the stage now, buffet-wise,
To carve this fine Italian sausage—thus!

MONTFLEURY

[*trying to be dignified*].

You outrage Thalia in insulting me!

CYRANO

[*very politely*].

If that Muse, Sir, who knows you not at all,
Could claim acquaintance with you,—oh, believe
(Seeing how urn-like, fat, and slow you are)
That she would make you taste her buskin's sole!

THE PIT.

Montfleury! Montfleury! Come—Baro's play!

CYRANO

[*to those who are calling out*].

I pray you have a care! If you go on
My scabbard soon will render up its blade!

[*The circle round him widens.*]

THE CROWD

[*drawing back*].

Take care!

CYRANO

[*to* MONTFLEURY].

Leave the stage!

THE CROWD

[*coming near and grumbling*].

Oh!—

CYRANO.

Did some one speak

[*They draw back again.*]

A Voice

[*singing at the back*].

Monsieur de Cyrano
Displays his tyrannies :
A fig for tyrants ! What, ho !
Come ! Play us *la Clorise* !

All the Pit

[*singing*].

La Clorise ! *la Clorise* ! . . .

Cyrano.

Let me but hear once more that foolish rhyme,
I slaughter every man of you.

A Burgher.

Oh ! Samson ?

Cyrano.

Yes, Samson ! Will you lend your jawbone, Sir ?

A Lady

[*in the boxes*].

Outrageous !

A Lord.

Scandalous !

A Burgher.

'Tis most annoying !

A Page.

Fair good sport !

The Pit.

Kss !—Montfleury . . . Cyrano !

CYRANO.

Silence !

THE PIT

[*wildly excited*].

Hooooh ! Quack ! Cock-a-doodle-doo !

CYRANO.

I order——

A PAGE.

Miow !

CYRANO.

I order silence, all !
And challenge the whole pit collectively !—
I write your names !—Approach, young heroes, here !
Each in his turn ! I cry the numbers out !—
Now which of you will come to ope the lists ?
You, Sir ? No ! You ? No ! The first duellist
Shall be despatched by me with honours due !
Let all who long for death hold up their hands !

[*A silence.*]

Modest ? You fear to see my naked blade ?
Not one name ?—Not one hand ?—Good, I proceed !

[*Turning towards the stage, where* MONTFLEURY *waits in an agony.*]

The theatre's too full, congested,—I
Would clear it out. . . . If not . . .

[*Puts his hand on his sword.*]

The knife must act !

MONTFLEURY.

I . . .

CYRANO

[*leaves his chair, and settles himself in the middle of the circle which has formed*].

I will clap my hands thrice, thus—full moon!
At the third clap, eclipse yourself!

THE PIT

[*amused*].

Ah!

CYRANO

[*clapping his hands*].

One!

MONTFLEURY.

I . . .

A VOICE

[*in the boxes*].

Stay!

THE PIT.

He stays . . . he goes . . . he stays . . .

MONTFLEURY

I think . . .

Gentlemen, . .

CYRANO

Two!

MONTFLEURY

I think 'twere wisest . . .

CYRANO.

Three!

[MONTFLEURY *disappears as through a trap. Tempest of laughs, whistling cries, etc.*]

THE WHOLE HOUSE.

Coward . . . come back !

CYRANO

[*delighted, sits back in his chair, arms crossed*].

Come back an if you dare !

A BURGHER.

Call for the orator !

[BELLEROSE *comes forward and bows.*]

THE BOXES.

Ah ! here's Bellerose !

BELLEROSE

[*elegantly*].

My noble lords . . .

THE PIT.

No ! no ! Jodelet !

JODELET

[*advancing, speaking through his nose*].

Calves !

THE PIT.

Ah ! bravo ! good ! go on !

JODELET.

No bravos, Sirs !

The fat tragedian whom you all love

Felt . . .

THE PIT.

Coward !

JODELET.

. . was obliged to go.

THE PIT.

Come back !

SOME.

No !

OTHERS.

Yes !

A YOUNG MAN

[*to* CYRANO].

But pray, Sir, for what reason, say,
Hate you Montfleury ?

CYRANO

[*graciously, still seated*].

Youthful gander, know
I have two reasons,—either will suffice.
Primo. An actor villainous ! who mouths,
And heaves up like a bucket from a well
The verses that should, bird-like, fly ! *Secundo*—
That is my secret . . .

THE OLD BOURGEOIS

[*behind him*].

Shameful ! You deprive us
Of the *Clorise* ! I must insist . . .

CYRANO

[*turning his chair towards the* BOURGEOIS, *respectfully*].

Old mule !
The verses of old Baro are not worth
A doit ! I'm glad to interrupt . . .

THE PRECIEUSES

[*in the boxes*].

Our Baro!—
My dear! How dares he venture! . . .

CYRANO

[*turning his chair towards the boxes, gallantly*].

Fairest ones,
Radiate, bloom, hold to our lips the cup
Of dreams intoxicating, Hebe-like!
Or, when death strikes, charm death with your sweet smiles;
Inspire our verse, but—criticise it not!

BELLEROSE.

We must give back the entrance fees!

CYRANO

[*turning his chair towards the stage.*]

Bellerose,
You make the first intelligent remark!
Would I rend Thespis' sacred mantle? Nay!

[*He rises, and throws a bag on the stage.*]

Catch then the purse I throw, and hold your peace!

THE HOUSE

[*dazzled*].

Ah! Oh!

JODELET

[*catching the purse dexterously and weighing it*].

At this price, you 've authority
To come each night, and stop *Clorise*, Sir!

THE PIT.

Ho! . .

Ho! ho! . . .

JODELET.

E'en if you chase us in a pack! . . .

BELLEROSE.

Clear out the hall! . . .

JODELET.

Get you all gone at once!

[*The people begin to go out, while* CYRANO *looks on with satisfaction. But the crowd soon stop on hearing the following scene, and remain where they are. The women, who, with their mantles on, are already standing up in the boxes, stop to listen, and finally reseat themselves.*]

LE BRET

[*to* CYRANO].

'Tis mad! . . .

A BORE

[*coming up to* CYRANO].

The actor Montfleury! 'Tis shameful!
Why, he's protected by the Duke of Candal!
Have you a patron?

CYRANO.

No!

THE BORE.

No patron? . . .

CYRANO.

None!

THE BORE.

What ! no great lord to shield you with his name

CYRANO

[*irritated*].

No, I have told you twice ! Must I repeat ?
No ! no protector . . .
[*His hand on his sword.*]
A protectress . . . here !

THE BORE.

But you must leave the town ?

CYRANO.

Well, that depends

THE BORE.

The Duke has a long arm !

CYRANO.

But not so long
As mine, when it is lengthened out . . .
[*Shows his sword.*]
As thus

THE BORE.

You think not to contend ?

CYRANO.

'Tis my idea !

THE BORE.

But . . .

CYRANO.

Show your heels, now !

THE BORE.
But I . . .

CYRANO.
Show your heels!
Or tell me why you stare so at my nose!

THE BORE
[*staggered*].
I . . .

CYRANO.
[*walking straight up to him*].
Well, what is there strange?

THE BORE
[*drawing back*].
Your Grace mistakes!

CYRANO.
How now? Is't soft and dangling, like a trunk?...

THE BORE
[*same play*].
I never . . .

CYRANO.
Is it crook'd, like an owl's beak?

THE BORE.
I . . .

CYRANO.
Do you see a wart upon the tip?

THE BORE.
Nay . . .

CYRANO.
Or a fly, that takes the air there? What
Is there to stare at?

THE BORE.

Oh . . .

CYRANO.

What do you see?

THE BORE.

But I was careful not to look—knew better.

CYRANO.

And why not look at it, an if you please?

THE BORE.

I was . . .

CYRANO.

Oh! it disgusts you!

THE BORE.

Sir!

CYRANO.

Its hue

Unwholesome seems to you?

THE BORE.

Sir!

CYRANO.

Or its shape?

THE BORE.

No, on the contrary! . . .

CYRANO.

Why then that air

Disparaging?—perchance you think it large?

THE BORE

[*stammering*].

No ; small, quite small—minute !

CYRANO.

Minute ! What now ?
Accuse me of a thing ridiculous !
Small—my nose ?

THE BORE.

Heaven help me !

CYRANO.

'Tis enormous !
Old Flathead, empty-headed meddler, know
That I am proud, possessing such appendice.
'Tis well known, a big nose is indicative
Of a soul affable, and kind, and courteous,
Liberal, brave, just like myself, and such
As you can never dare to dream yourself,
Rascal contemptible ! For that witless face
That my hand soon will come to cuff,—is all
As empty . . .

[*He cuffs him.*]

THE BORE.

Aie !

CYRANO.

—of pride, of aspiration,
Of feeling, poetry,—of godlike spark
Of all that appertains to my big nose,

[*He turns him by the shoulders, suiting the action to the word.*]

As . . . what my boot will shortly come and kick !

THE BORE
[*running away*].

Help! Call the Guard!

CYRANO.

Take notice, boobies all,
Who find my visage's centre ornament
A thing to jest at,—that it is my wont—
An if the jester's noble—ere we part
To let him taste my steel, and not my boot!

DE GUICHE
[*who, with the* MARQUISES, *has come down from the stage*].

But he becomes a nuisance!

THE VISCOUNT DE VALVERT
[*shrugging his shoulders*].

Swaggerer!

DE GUICHE.

Will no one put him down? . . .

THE VISCOUNT.

No one? But wait!
I'll treat him to . . . one of my quips! . . . See here! . . .
[*He goes up to* CYRANO, *who is watching him, and with a conceited air.*]
Sir, your nose is . . . hm . . . it is . . . very big!

CYRANO
[*gravely*].

Very!

THE VISCOUNT
[*laughing*].

Ha!

CYRANO

[*imperturbably*].

Is that all? . . .

THE VISCOUNT

What do you mean?

CYRANO.

Ah no! young blade! That was a trifle short!
You might have said at least a hundred things
By varying the tone, . . . like this, suppose, . . .
Aggressive: 'Sir, if I had such a nose
I'd amputate it!' Friendly: 'When you sup
It must annoy you, dipping in your cup;
You need a drinking-bowl of special shape!'
Descriptive: ''Tis a rock! . . . a peak! . . . a cape!
—A cape, forsooth! 'Tis a peninsular!'
Curious: 'How serves that oblong capsular?
For scissor-sheath? or pot to hold your ink?'
Gracious: 'You love the little birds, I think?
I see you've managed with a fond research
To find their tiny claws a roomy perch!'
Truculent: 'When you smoke your pipe . . . suppose
That the tobacco-smoke spouts from your nose,—
Do not the neighbours, as the fumes rise higher,
Cry terror-struck: "The chimney is afire"?'
Considerate: 'Take care, . . . your head bowed low
By such a weight . . . lest head o'er heels you go!'
Tender: 'Pray get a small umbrella made,
Lest its bright colour in the sun should fade!'

Pedantic : 'That beast Aristophanes
Names Hippocamelelephantoles
Must have possessed just such a solid lump
Of flesh and bone, beneath his forehead's bump !'
Cavalier : 'The last fashion, friend, that hook ?
To hang your hat on ? 'Tis a useful crook !'
Emphatic : 'No wind, O majestic nose,
Can give *thee* cold !—save when the mistral blows !'
Dramatic : 'When it bleeds, what a Red Sea !'
Admiring : 'Sign for a perfumery !'
Lyric : 'Is this a conch ? . . . a Triton you ?'
Simple : 'When is the monument on view ?'
Rustic : 'That thing a nose ? Marry-come-up !
'Tis a dwarf pumpkin, or a prize turnup !'
Military : 'Point against cavalry !'
Practical : 'Put it in a lottery !
Assuredly 'twould be the biggest prize !'
Or . . . parodying Pyramus' sighs . . .
'Behold the nose that mars the harmony
Of its master's phiz ! blushing its treachery !'
—Such, my dear sir, is what you might have said
Had you of wit or letters the least jot :
But, O most lamentable man !—of wit
You never had an atom, and of letters
You have three letters only !—they spell Ass !
And,—had you had the necessary wit,
To serve me all the pleasantries I quote
Before this noble audience, . . . e'en so,
You would not have been let to utter one,—
Nay, not the half or quarter of such jest !
I take them from myself all in good part,
But not from any other man that breathes !

DE GUICHE

[*trying to draw away the dismayed* VISCOUNT]

Come away, Viscount!

THE VISCOUNT

[*choking with rage*].

Hear his arrogance!

A country lout who . . . who . . . has got no gloves!

Who goes out without sleeve-knots, ribbons, lace!

CYRANO.

True; all my elegances are within.

I do not prank myself out, puppy-like;

My toilet is more thorough, if less gay;

I would not sally forth,—a half-washed out

Affront upon my cheek,—a conscience

Yellow-eyed, bilious, from its sodden sleep,

A ruffled honour, . . . scruples grimed and dull!

I show no bravery of shining gems.

Truth, Independence, are my fluttering plumes.

'Tis not my form I lace to make me slim,

But brace my soul with efforts as with stays,

Covered with exploits, not with ribbon knots,

My spirit bristling high like your moustaches,

I, traversing the crowds and chattering groups

Make Truth ring bravely out like clash of spurs!

THE VISCOUNT.

But, Sir . .

CYRANO.

I wear no gloves? and what of that?

I had one, . . . remnant of an old worn pair,

And, knowing not what else to do with it,

I threw it in the face of . . . some young fool.

THE VISCOUNT.

Base scoundrel! Rascally flat-footed lout!

CYRANO

[*taking off his hat, and bowing as if the* VISCOUNT *had introduced himself*].

Ah? . . . and I, Cyrano Savinien
Hercule de Bergerac.

[*Laughter.*]

THE VISCOUNT

[*angrily*].

Buffoon!

CYRANO

[*calling out as if he had been seized with the cramp*]

Aie! aie!

THE VISCOUNT

[*who was going away, turns back*].

What on earth is the fellow saying now?

CYRANO

[*with grimaces of pain*].

It must be moved,—it's getting stiff, I vow,
—This comes of leaving it in idleness!
Aie! . . .

THE VISCOUNT.

What ails you?

CYRANO.

The cramp! cramp in my sword!

THE VISCOUNT

[*drawing his sword*].

Good!

CYRANO.

You shall feel a charming little stroke!

THE VISCOUNT
[*contemptuously*].

Poet! . . .

CYRANO.

Ay, poet, Sir! In proof of which,
While we fence, presto! all extempore
I will compose a ballade.

THE VISCOUNT.

A ballade?

CYRANO.

Belike you know not what a ballade is.

THE VISCOUNT.

But . . .

CYRANO
[*reciting as if repeating a lesson*].

Know then that the ballade should contain
Three eight-versed couplets . . .

THE VISCOUNT
[*stamping*].

Oh!

CYRANO.
[*still reciting*].

And an *envoi*
Of four lines . . .

THE VISCOUNT.

You . . .

CYRANO.

I'll make one while we fight,
And touch you at the final line.

THE VISCOUNT.

No!

CYRANO.

No?

[*declaiming*].

The duel in Hotel of Burgundy,—fought
By De Bergerac and a good-for-nought!

THE VISCOUNT.

What may that be, an if you please?

CYRANO.

The title.

THE HOUSE.

[*in great excitement*].

Give room!—Good sport!—Make place.—Fair play!—No noise!

[*Tableau. A circle of curious spectators in the pit; the* MARQUISES *and* OFFICERS *mingled with the common people; the* PAGES *climbing on each other's shoulders to see better. All the women standing up in the boxes. To the right,* DE GUICHE *and his retinue. Left,* LE BRET, RAGUENEAU, CYRANO, *etc.*]

CYRANO.

[*shutting his eyes for a second*].

Wait while I choose my rhymes. . . . I have them now!

[*He suits the action to each word.*]

I gaily doff my beaver low,
And, freeing hand and heel,

My heavy mantle off I throw,
And I draw my polished steel;
Graceful as Phœbus, round I wheel,
Alert as Scaramouch,
A word in your ear, Sir Spark, I steal,—
At the envoi's *end, I touch!*

[*They engage.*]

Better for you had you lain low;
Where skewer my cock? In the heel?—
In the heart, your ribbon blue below?—
In the hip, and make you kneel?
Ho for the music of clashing steel!
—What now?—A hit? Not much!
'Twill be in the paunch the stroke I steal,
When, at the envoi, *I touch.*

Oh for a rhyme, a rhyme in o?—
You wriggle, starch-white, my eel?
A rhyme! a rhyme! the white feather you show!
Tac! I parry the point of your steel;
—The point you hoped to make me feel;
I open the line, now clutch
Your spit, Sir Scullion,—show your zeal!
At the envoi's *end, I touch!*

[*He declaims solemnly.*]

Envoi.

Prince, pray Heaven for your soul's weal!
I move a pace—lo, such! and such!
Cut over,—feint!

[*Thrusting.*]

What ho! You reel?

[*The* VISCOUNT *staggers.* CYRANO *salutes.*]

At the envoi's *end, I touch!*

[*Acclamations. Applause in the boxes. Flowers and handkerchiefs are thrown down. The* OFFICERS *surround* CYRANO, *congratulating him.* RAGUENEAU *dances for joy.* LE BRET *is happy, but anxious. The* VISCOUNT'S *friends hold him up and bear him away.*]

THE CROWD

[*with one long shout*].

Ah!

A TROOPER.

'Tis superb!

A WOMAN.

A pretty stroke!

RAGUENEAU.

A marvel!

A MARQUIS.

A novelty!

LE BRET.

O madman!

[*The crowd presses round* CYRANO. *Chorus of*]

Compliments!

Let me congratulate! . . . Quite unsur-

A WOMAN'S VOICE.

There is a hero for you! . . .

A MUSKETEER

[*advancing to* CYRANO *with outstretched hand*].

Sir, permit;
Nought could be finer;—I'm a judge, I think;
I stamped, i' faith!—to show my admiration!
[*He goes away.*]

CYRANO

[*to* CUIGY].

Who is that gentleman?

CUIGY.

Why—D'Artagnan!

LE BRET

[*to* CYRANO, *taking his arm*].

A word with you! . . .

CYRANO.

Wait, let the rabble go! .
[*To* BELLEROSE.]
May I stay?

BELLEROSE

[*respectfully*].

Without doubt?
[*Cries are heard outside*].

JODELET

[*who has looked out*].

They hoot Montfleury

BELLEROSE

[*solemnly*].

Sic transit! . . .

[*To the* PORTERS.]

Sweep—close all, but leave the lights.
We sup, but later on we must return,
For a rehearsal of to-morrow's farce.

[JODELET *and* BELLEROSE *go out, bowing low to* CYRANO.]

THE PORTER

[*to* CYRANO].

You do not dine, Sir?

CYRANO.

No.

[*The* PORTER *goes out.*]

LE BRET.

Because?

CYRANO

[*proudly*].

Because . . .

[*Changing his tone as the* PORTER *goes away.*]

I have no money! . . .

LE BRET

[*with the action of throwing a bag*].

How! The bag of crowns? . . .

CYRANO.

Paternal bounty, in a day, thou 'rt sped!

LE BRET.

How live the next month? . .

CYRANO.

I have nothing left.

LE BRET.

Folly!

CYRANO.

But what a graceful action! Think!

THE BUFFET-GIRL

[*coughing, behind her counter*].

Hum!

[CYRANO *and* LE BRET *turn. She comes timidly forward.*]

Sir, my heart mislikes to know you fast.

[*Showing the buffet.*]

See, all you need. Serve yourself!

CYRANO

[*taking off his hat*].

Gentle child,
Although my Gascon pride would else forbid
To take the least bestowal from your hands,
My fear of wounding you outweighs that pride,
And bids accept . . .

[*He goes to the buffet.*]

A trifle! . . . These few grapes.

[*She offers him the whole bunch. He takes a few.*]

Nay, but this bunch! . . .

[*She tries to give him wine, but he stops her.*]

A glass of water fair! . . .
And half a macaroon!

[*He gives back the other half.*]

LE BRET.

What foolery!

THE BUFFET-GIRL.

Take something else!

CYRANO.

I take your hand to kiss.

[*He kisses her hand as though she were a princess.*]

THE BUFFET-GIRL.

Thank you, kind Sir!

[*She curtsies.*]

Good-night.

[*She goes out.*]

SCENE V

CYRANO, LE BRET.

CYRANO

[*to* LE BRET].

Now talk—I listen.

[*He stands at the buffet, and placing before him first the macaroon,*]

Dinner! . . .

[*then the grapes,*]

Dessert! . . .

[*then the glass of water,*]

Wine! . . .

[*he seats himself.*]

So! And now to table!

Ah! I was hungry, friend, nay, ravenous!

[*Eating.*]

You said——?

LE BRET.

These fops, would-be belligerent,
Will, if you heed them only, turn your head ! . . .
Ask people of good sense if you would know
The effect of your fine insolence——

CYRANO

[*finishing his macaroon*].

Enormous !

LE BRET.

The Cardinal . . .

CYRANO

[*radiant*].

The Cardinal—was there ?

LE BRET.

Must have thought it . . .

CYRANO.

Original, i' faith !

LE BRET

But . . .

CYRANO.

He 's an author. 'Twill not fail to please him
That I should mar a brother-author's play.

LE BRET.

You make too many enemies by far !

CYRANO

[*eating his grapes*].

How many think you I have made to-night ?

LE BRET.

Forty, no less, not counting ladies.

CYRANO.

Count !

LE BRET.

Montfleury first, the bourgeois, then De Guiche,
The Viscount, Baro, the Academy . . .

CYRANO.

Enough ! I am o'erjoyed !

LE BRET.

But these strange ways
Where will they lead you, at the end ? Explain
Your system—come !

CYRANO.

I in a labyrinth
Was lost—too many different paths to choose ;
I took . . .

LE BRET.

Which ?

CYRANO.

Oh ! by far the simplest path . . .
Decided to be admirable in all !

LE BRET

[*shrugging his shoulders*].

So be it ! But the motive of your hate
To Montfleury—come, tell me !

CYRANO.

[*rising*].

This Silenus,
Big-bellied, coarse, still deems himself a peril—
A danger to the love of lovely ladies,
And, while he sputters out his actor's part,
Makes sheep's eyes at their boxes—goggling frog!
I hate him since the evening he presumed
To raise his eyes to hers . . . Meseemed I saw
A slug crawl slavering o'er a flower's petals!

LE BRET

[*stupefied*].

How now? What? Can it be . . .?

CYRANO

[*laughing bitterly*].

That I should love? . . .

[*Changing his tone,—gravely.*]

I love.

LE BRET.

And may I know? . . . You never said . . .

CYRANO.

Come now, bethink you! . . . The fond hope to be
Belovèd, e'en by some poor graceless lady,
Is, by this nose of mine for aye bereft me;
—This lengthy nose which, go where'er I will,
Pokes yet a quarter-mile ahead of me;
But I may love,—and I whom? 'Tis Fate's decree
I love the fairest—how were 't otherwise?

LE BRET.

The fairest? . . .

CYRANO.

Ay, the fairest of the world,
Most brilliant—most refined—most golden-haired?

LE BRET.

Who is this lady?

CYRANO.

She 's a danger mortal,
All unsuspicious,—full of charms unconscious,
Like a sweet perfumed rose,—a snare of nature,
Within whose petals Cupid lurks in ambush!
He who has seen her smile has known perfection,
—Instilling into trifles grace's essence,
Divinity in every careless gesture;
Not Venus' self can mount her conch blown seaward,
As she can step into her *chaise à porteurs*,
Nor Dian fleet across the woods spring-flowered,
Light as my Lady o'er the stones of Paris! . . .

LE BRET.

Sapristi! all is clear!

CYRANO.

As spider-webs!

LE BRET.

Your cousin, Madeleine Robin?

CYRANO.

Roxane!

LE BRET.

Well, but so much the better! Tell her so!
She saw your triumph here this very night!

CYRANO.

Look well at me,—then tell me, with what hope
This vile protuberance can inspire my heart!
I do not lull me with illusions,—yet
At times I'm weak: in evening hours dim
I enter some fair pleasaunce, perfumed sweet;
With my poor ugly devil of a nose
I scent spring's essence,—in the silver rays
I see some knight,—a lady on his arm,
And think, 'To saunter thus 'neath the moonshine,
I were fain to have my lady, too, beside!'
Thought soars to ecstasy, . . . O sudden fall!
—The shadow of my profile on the wall!

LE BRET
[*tenderly*].

My friend! . . .

CYRANO.

My friend, at times 'tis hard, 'tis bitter,
To feel my loneliness,—my own ill-favour . . .

LE BRET
[*taking his hand*].

You weep?

CYRANO.

No, never! Think, how vilely suited
Adown this nose a tear its passage tracing!
I never will, while of myself I'm master,
Let the divinity of tears—their beauty
Be wedded to such common ugly grossness!
Nothing more solemn than a tear,—sublimer;
And I would not by weeping turn to laughter
The grave emotion that a tear engenders!

LE BRET.

Never be sad! What's love?—a chance of Fortune!

CYRANO

[*shaking his head*].

Look I a Cæsar to woo Cleopatra?
A Tito to aspire to Berenice?

LE BRET.

Your courage and your wit!—The little maid
Who offered you refreshment even now,
Her eyes did not abhor you—you saw well!

CYRANO

[*impressed*].

True!

LE BRET.

Well, how then? . . . I saw Roxane herself
Was death-pale as she watched the duel.

CYRANO.

Pale?

LE BRET.

Her heart, her fancy, are already caught!
Put it to th' touch!

CYRANO.

That she may mock my face?
That is the one thing on this earth I fear!

THE PORTER

[*introducing some one to* CYRANO]

Sir, some one asks for you . . .

CYRANO
[*seeing the* DUENNA].
God ! her duenna !

SCENE VI

CYRANO, LE BRET, *the* DUENNA.

THE DUENNA
[*with a low bow*].
I was bid ask you where a certain lady
Could see her valiant cousin,—but in secret.

CYRANO
[*overwhelmed*].
See me ?

THE DUENNA
[*curtsying*].
Ay, Sir ! She has somewhat to tell.

CYRANO.
Somewhat ? . .

THE DUENNA
[*still curtsying*].
Ay, private matters !

CYRANO
[*staggering*].
Ah ! my God !

THE DUENNA.
To-morrow, at the early blush of dawn
We go to hear mass at St. Roch.

CYRANO
[*leaning against* LE BRET].
My God!

THE DUENNA.
After,—what place for a few minutes' speech?

CYRANO
[*confused*].
Where? Ah! . . . but . . . Ah my God! . . .

THE DUENNA.
Say!

CYRANO.
I reflect! . . .

THE DUENNA.
Where?

CYRANO.
At— the pastry-house of Ragueneau.

THE DUENNA.
Where lodges he?

CYRANO.
The Rue— God!—St. Honoré

THE DUENNA
[*going*].
Good. Be you there. At seven.

CYRANO.
Without fail.

[THE DUENNA *goes out.*]

SCENE VII

CYRANO, LE BRET. *Then* ACTORS, ACTRESSES, CUIGY, BRISAILLE, LIGNIÈRE, *the* PORTER, *the* VIOLINISTS.

CYRANO

[*falling into* LE BRET'S *arms*].

A rendezvous . . . from her ! . . .

LE BRET.

You 're sad no more !

CYRANO.

Ah ! let the world go burn ! She knows I live !

LE BRET.

Now you 'll be calm, I hope ?

CYRANO

[*beside himself for joy*].

Calm ? I now calm ?
I 'll be frenetic, frantic,— raving mad !
Oh for an army to attack !—a host !
I 've ten hearts in my breast ; a score of arms ;
No dwarfs to cleave in twain ! . . .

[*Wildly.*]

No ! Giants now !

[*For a few moments the shadows of the* ACTORS *have been moving on the stage, whispers are heard—the rehearsal is beginning. The* VIOLINISTS *are in their places.*]

A VOICE FROM THE STAGE.

Hollo there ! Silence ! We rehearse !

CYRANO
[*laughing*].

We go !

[*He moves away. By the big door enter* CUIGY, BRISSAILLE, *and some* OFFICERS, *holding up* LIGNIÈRE, *who is drunk.*]

CUIGY.

Cyrano !

CYRANO.

Well, what now ?

CUIGY.

A lusty thrush
They 're bringing you !

CYRANO
[*recognising him*].

Lignière ! . . . What has chanced ?

CUIGY.

He seeks you !

BRISSAILLE.

He dare not go home !

CYRANO.

Why not ?

LIGNIÈRE
[*in a husky voice, showing him a crumpled letter*].

This letter warns me . . . that a hundred men . . .
Revenge that threatens me, . . . that song, you know—
At the Porte de Nesle. To get to my own house
I must pass there. . . . I dare not ! . . . Give me leave
To sleep to-night beneath your roof ! Allow . . .

CYRANO.

A hundred men? You'll sleep in your own bed!

LIGNIÈRE

[*frightened*].

But——

CYRANO

[*in a terrible voice, showing him the lighted lantern held by the* PORTER, *who is listening curiously*].

Take the lantern.

[LIGNIÈRE *seizes it.*]

Let us start! I swear
That I will make your bed to-night myself!

[*To the* OFFICERS.]

Follow, some stay behind, as witnesses!

CUIGY.

A hundred! . . .

CYRANO.

Less, to-night—would be too few!

[*The* ACTORS *and* ACTRESSES, *in their costumes, have come down from the stage, and are listening.*]

LE BRET.

But why embroil yourself?

CYRANO.

Le Bret who scolds!

LE BRET.

That worthless drunkard!——

CYRANO

[*slapping* LIGNIÈRE *on the shoulder*].

Wherefore? For this cause;—
This wine-barrel, this cask of Burgundy,
Did, on a day, an action full of grace;
As he was leaving church, he saw his love
Take holy water;—he, who is afeared
At water's taste, ran quickly to the stoup,
And drank it all, to the last drop! . . .

AN ACTRESS.

Indeed,
That was a graceful thing!

CYRANO.

Ay, was it not?

THE ACTRESS

[*to the others*].

But why a hundred men 'gainst one poor rhymer!

CYRANO.

March!

[*To the* OFFICERS.]

Gentlemen, when you shall see me charge,
Bear me no succour, none, whate'er the odds!

ANOTHER ACTRESS

[*jumping down from the stage*].

Oh! I shall come and see!

CYRANO.

Come, then!

ANOTHER

[*jumping down—to an old* ACTOR].

And you? . . .

CYRANO.

Come all—the Doctor, Isabel, Leander,
Come, for you shall add, in a motley swarm
The farce Italian to this Spanish drama!

ALL THE WOMEN

[*dancing for joy*].

Bravo!—a mantle, quick!—my hood!

JODELET.

Come on!

CYRANO.

Play us a march, gentlemen of the band!

[*The* VIOLINISTS *join the procession, which is forming. They take the footlights, and divide them for torches.*]

Brave officers! next, women in costume,
And, twenty paces on—

[*He takes his place.*]

I, all alone,
Beneath the plume that Glory lends, herself,
To deck my beaver,—proud as Scipio! . . .
—You hear me?—I forbid you succour me!—
One, two, three! Porter, open wide the doors!

[*The* PORTER *opens the doors; a view of old Paris in the moonlight is seen.*]

Ah! . . . Paris wrapped in night! half nebulous:
The moonlight streams o'er the blue-shadowed roofs;
A lovely frame for this wild battle-scene;
Beneath the vapour's floating scarves, the Seine
Trembles, mysterious, like a magic mirror,
And, shortly, you shall see what you shall see!

ALL.

To the Porte de Nesle !

CYRANO

[*standing on the threshold*].

Ay, to the Port de Nesle !

[*Turning to the* ACTRESS.]

Did you not ask, young lady, for what cause
Against this rhymer fivescore men were sent ?

[*He draws his sword ; then, calmly*]

'Twas that they knew him for a friend of mine !

[*He goes out.* LIGNIÈRE *staggers first after him, then the* ACTRESSES *on the* OFFICERS' *arms —the* ACTORS. *The procession starts to the sound of the violins and in the faint light of the candles.*]

CURTAIN.

ACT II

The Poet's Eating-House.

Ragueneau's *cook and pastry shop. A large kitchen at the corner of the Rue St. Honoré and the Rue de l'Arbre Sec—which are seen in the background through the glass door, in the grey dawn.*

On the left, in the foreground, a counter, surmounted by a stand in forged iron, on which are hung geese, ducks, and white peacocks. In great china vases are tall bouquets of simple flowers, principally yellow sunflowers.

On the same side, further back, an immense open fireplace, in front of which, between monster fire-dogs, on each of which hangs a little saucepan, the roasts are dripping into the pans.

On the right, foreground with door.

Further back, staircase leading to a little room under the roof, the entrance of which is visible through the open shutter. In this room a table is laid. A small Flemish lustre is alight. It is a place for eating and drinking. A wooden gallery continuing the staircase apparently leads to other similar little rooms.

In the middle of the shop an iron hoop is suspended from the ceiling by a string with which it can be drawn up and down, and big game is hung around it.

The ovens in the darkness under the stairs give forth a red glow. The copper pans shine. The spits are turning. Heaps of food formed into pyramids. Hams suspended. It is the busy hour of the morning. Bustle and hurry of scullions, fat cooks, and diminutive apprentices, their caps profusely decorated with cock's feathers and wings of guinea-fowl.

On metal and wicker plates they are bringing in piles of cakes and tarts.

Tables laden with rolls and dishes of food. Other tables surrounded with chairs are ready for the consumers.

A small table in a corner covered with papers, at which RAGUENEAU *is seated writing on the rising of the curtain.*

SCENE I

RAGUENEAU, PASTRY-COOKS, *then* LISE. RAGUENEAU *is writing, with an inspired air, at a small table, and counting on his fingers.*

FIRST PASTRY-COOK

[*bringing in an elaborate fancy dish*].

Fruits in nougat!

SECOND PASTRY-COOK

[*bringing another dish*].

Custard!

THIRD PASTRY-COOK

[*bringing a roast, decorated with feathers*].

Peacock!

FOURTH PASTRY-COOK

[*bringing a batch of cakes on a slab*].

Rissoles!

FIFTH PASTRY-COOK

[*bringing a sort of pie-dish*].

Beef jelly!

RAGUENEAU

[*ceasing to write, and raising his head*]

Aurora's silver rays begin to glint e'en now on the copper pans, and thou, O Ragueneau! must perforce stifle in thy breast the God of Song! Anon shall come the hour of the lute!—now 'tis the hour of the oven! [*He rises. To a* COOK.] You, make that sauce longer, 'tis too short!

THE COOK.

How much too short?

RAGUENEAU.

Three feet.

[*He passes on further.*]

THE COOK.

What means he?

FIRST PASTRY-COOK

[*showing a dish to* RAGUENEAU]

The tart!

SECOND PASTRY-COOK.

The pie!

RAGUENEAU

[*before the fire*].

My Muse, retire, lest thy bright eyes be reddened by the faggot's blaze! [*To a* COOK, *showing him some loaves.*] You have put the cleft o' th' loaves in the wrong place; know you not that the *cæsura* should be between the hemistiches? [*To another, showing him an unfinished pasty.*] To this palace of paste you must add the roof. . . . [*To a young* APPRENTICE, *who, seated on the ground, is spitting the fowls.*] And you, as you put on your lengthy spit the modest fowl and the superb turkey, my son,—alternate them, as the old Malherbe loved well to alternate his long lines of verse with the short ones; thus shall your roasts, in strophes, turn before the flame!

ANOTHER APPRENTICE

[*also coming up with a tray covered by a napkin*].

Master, I bethought me erewhile of your tastes and made this, which will please you, I hope.

[*He uncovers the tray, and shows a large lyre made of pastry.*]

RAGUENEAU

[*enchanted*].

A lyre!

THE APPRENTICE

'Tis of brioche pastry.

RAGUENEAU

[*touched*].

With conserved fruits.

THE APPRENTICE.

The strings, see, are of sugar.

RAGUENEAU

[*giving him a coin*].

Go, drink my health! [*Seeing* LISE *enter.*] Hush! my wife. Bustle, pass on, and hide that money! [*To* LISE, *showing her the lyre, with a conscious look.*] Is it not beautiful?

LISE.

'Tis passing silly!

[*She puts a pile of papers on the counter.*]

RAGUENEAU.

Bags? Good I thank you. [*He looks at them.*] Heavens! my cherished leaves! The poems of my friends! Torn, dismembered to make bags for holding biscuits and cakes! . . . Ah, 'tis the old tale again . . . Orpheus and the Bacchantes!

LISE

[*drily*].

And am I not free to turn at last to some use the sole thing that your wretched scribblers of halting lines leave behind them by way of payment?

RAGUENEAU.

Grovelling ant! . . . Insult not the divine grasshoppers, the sweet singers!

LISE.

Before you were the sworn comrade of all that crew, my friend, you did not call your wife ant and Bacchante!

RAGUENEAU.

To turn fair verse to such a use!

LISE.

'Faith, 'tis all it 's good for.

RAGUENEAU.

Pray then, madam, to what use would you degrade prose?

SCENE II

The SAME. TWO CHILDREN, *who have just trotted into the shop.*

RAGUENEAU.

What would you, little ones?

FIRST CHILD.

Three pies.

RAGUENEAU

[*serving them*].

See, hot and well browned.

SECOND CHILD.

If it please you, Sir, will you wrap them up for us?

RAGUENEAU

[*aside, distressed*].

Alas! one of my bags! [*To the* CHILDREN.] What? must I wrap them up?

[*He takes a bag, and just as he is about to put in the pies, he reads*]

'*Ulysses thus, on leaving fair Penelope . . .*'

Not that one! . . .

[*He puts it aside, and takes another, and as he is about to put in the pies, he reads*]

'*The gold-locked Phœbus . . .*'

Nay, nor that one! . . . [*Same play.*]

LISE

[*impatiently*].

What are you dallying for?

RAGUENEAU.

Here! here! here! [*He chooses a third, resignedly.*] The sonnet to Phillis! . . . but 'tis hard to part with it!

LISE.

By good luck! he has made up his mind at last! [*Shrugging her shoulders.*] Nicodemus!

[*She mounts on a chair, and begins to range plates on a dresser.*]

RAGUENEAU

[*taking advantage of the moment she turns her back, calls back the* CHILDREN, *who are already at the door*].

Hist! children! . . . Render me back the sonnet to Phillis, and you shall have six pies instead of three.

[*The* CHILDREN *give him back the bag, seize the*

cakes quickly, and go out. RAGUENEAU, *smoothing out the paper, begins to declaim.*]

'Phillis! . . .' On that sweet name a smear of butter! 'Phillis! . . .'

[CYRANO *enters hurriedly.*]

SCENE III

RAGUENEAU, LISE, CYRANO, *then the* MUSKETEER

CYRANO.

What 's o'clock?

RAGUENEAU

[*bowing low*].

Six o'clock.

CYRANO

[*with emotion*].

In one hour's time!

[*He paces up and down the shop.*]

RAGUENEAU

[*following him*].

Bravo! I saw . . .

CYRANO.

Well, what saw you, then?

RAGUENEAU.

Your combat! . . .

CYRANO.

Which?

RAGUENEAU.

That in the Burgundy Hotel, 'faith!

CYRANO

[*contemptuously*].

Ah! . . . the duel!

RAGUENEAU

[*admiringly*].

Ay! the duel in verse! . . .

LISE.

He can talk of nought else!

CYRANO.

Well! Good! let be!

RAGUENEAU

[*making passes with a spit that he catches up*)

'At the *envoi*'s end, I touch! . . . At the *envoi*'s end, I touch!' . . . 'Tis fine, fine!

[*With increasing enthusiasm.*]

At the *envoi*'s end——'

CYRANO.

What hour is it now, Ragueneau

RAGUENEAU.

[*stopping short in the act of thrusting to look at the clock*].

Five minutes after six! . . . 'I touch!'

[*He straightens himself.*]

. . Oh! to write a ballade!

LISE

[*to* CYRANO, *who as he passes by the counter has absently shaken hands with her*].

What 's wrong with your hand ?

CYRANO.

Nought ; a slight cut.

RAGUENEAU.

Have you been in some danger ?

CYRANO.

None in the world.

LISE

[*shaking her finger at him*].

Methinks you speak not the truth in saying that !

CYRANO.

Did you see my nose quiver when I spoke ? 'Faith, it must have been a monstrous lie that should move it !

[*Changing his tone.*]

I wait some one here. Leave us alone, and disturb us for nought an it were not for crack of doom !

RAGUENEAU.

But 'tis impossible ; my poets are coming . . .

LISE

[*ironically*].

Oh ay, for their first meal o' the day !

CYRANO.

Prythee, take them aside when I shall make you sign to do so. . . . What's o'clock?

RAGUENEAU

Ten minutes after six.

CYRANO

[*nervously seating himself at* RAGUENEAU'S *table, and drawing some paper towards him.*]

A pen! . . .

RAGUENEAU

[*giving him the one from behind his ear*].

Here—a swan's quill.

A MUSKETEER

[*with fierce moustache, enters, and in a stentorian voice*]

Good-day!

[LISE *goes up to him quickly.*]

CYRANO

[*turning round*].

Who's that?

RAGUENEAU.

'Tis a friend of my wife—a terrible warrior—at least so says he himself

CYRANO

[*taking up the pen, and motioning* RAGUENEAU *away*].

Hush!——[*To himself.*] I will write, fold it, give it her, and fly!—[*Throws down the pen.*] Coward!

. . . But strike me dead if I dare to speak to her, . . . ay, even one single word! [*To* RAGUENEAU.] What time is it?

RAGUENEAU.

A quarter after six! . . .

CYRANO

[*striking his breast*].

Ay—a single word of all those here! here! But writing, 'tis easier done . . . [*He takes up the pen.*] Go to, I will write it, that love-letter! Oh! I have writ it and rewrit it in my own mind so oft that it lies there ready for pen and ink; and if I lay but my soul by my letter-sheet, 'tis nought to do but to copy from it.

[*He writes. Through the glass of the door the silhouettes of thin figures move uncertainly and hesitatingly.*]

SCENE IV

RAGUENEAU, LISE, *the* MUSKETEER. CYRANO *at the little table writing. The* POETS, *dressed in black, their stockings ungartered, and covered with mud.*

LISE

[*entering, to* RAGUENEAU].

Here they come, your mud-bespattered friends!

FIRST POET

[*entering, to* RAGUENEAU].

Brother in art! . . .

SECOND POET

[*to* RAGUENEAU, *shaking his hands*].

Dear brother !

THIRD POET.

High soaring eagle among pastry-cooks ! [*He sniffs.*] Marry ! it smells good here in your eyry !

FOURTH POET.

'Tis at Phœbus' own rays that thy roasts turn !

FIFTH POET.

Apollo among master-cooks——

RAGUENEAU

[*whom they surround and embrace*].

Ah ! how quick a man feels at his ease with them! . . .

FIRST POET.

We were stayed by the mob ; they are crowded all round the Porte de Nesle ! . . .

SECOND POET.

Eight bleeding brigand carcasses strew the pavements there—all slit open with sword-gashes !

CYRANO

[*raising his head a minute*].

Eight ? . . . hold, methought seven.

[*He goes on writing*]

RAGUENEAU

[*to* CYRANO].

Know you who might be the hero of the fray ?

CYRANO

[*carelessly*].

Not I.

LISE

[*to the* MUSKETEER].

And you? know you?

THE MUSKETEER

[*twirling his moustache*].

Maybe!

CYRANO

[*writing a little way off:—he is heard murmuring a word from time to time*].

'*I love thee!*'

FIRST POET.

'Twas one man, say they all, ay swear to it, one man who, single-handed, put the whole band to the rout!

SECOND POET.

'Twas a strange sight!—pikes and cudgels strewed thick upon the ground.

CYRANO

[*writing*].

. . . '*Thine eyes*' . . .

THIRD POET.

And they were picking up hats all the way to the Quai d'Orfèvres!

FIRST POET.

Sapristi! but he must have been a ferocious . . .

CYRANO

[*same play*].

. . . '*Thy lips*' . . .

FIRST POET.

'Twas a parlous fearsome giant that was the author of such exploits!

CYRANO

[*same play*].

. . '*And when I see thee come, I faint for fear.*'

SECOND POET

[*filching a cake*].

What hast rhymed of late, Ragueneau?

CYRANO

[*same play*].

. . . '*Who worships thee*' . . .

[*He stops, just as he is about to sign, and gets up, slipping the letter into his doublet.*]

No need I sign, since I give it her myself.

RAGUENEAU

[*to* SECOND POET.]

I have put a recipe into verse.

THIRD POET

[*seating himself by a plate of cream-puffs*].

Go to! Let us hear these verses!

FOURTH POET

[*looking at a cake which he has taken*].

Its cap is all a' one side!

[*He makes one bite of the top.*]

FIRST POET.

See how this gingerbread woos the famished rhymer with its almond eyes, and its eyebrows of angelica! [*He takes it.*]

SECOND POET.

We listen.

THIRD POET

[*squeezing a cream-puff gently*].

How it laughs! Till its very cream runs over!

SECOND POET

[*biting a bit off the great lyre of pastry*].

This is the first time in my life that ever I drew any means of nourishing me from the lyre!

RAGUENEAU

[*who has put himself ready for reciting, cleared his throat, settled his cap, struck an attitude*].

A recipe in verse! . . .

SECOND POET

[*to* FIRST, *nudging him*].

You are breakfasting?

FIRST POET

[*to* SECOND]

And you dining, methinks.

RAGUENEAU.

How almond tartlets are made.

Beat your eggs up, light and quick ;
Froth them thick ;
Mingle with them while you beat
Juice of lemon, essence fine ;
Then combine
The best milk of almonds sweet.

Circle with a custard paste
The slim waist
Of your tartlet-moulds ; the top
With a skilful finger print,
Nick and dint,
Round their edge, then, drop by drop,

In its little dainty bed
Your cream shed :
In the oven place each mould :
Reappearing, softly browned,
The renowned
Almond tartlets you behold !

THE POETS

[*with mouths crammed full*].

Exquisite ! Delicious !

A POET

[*choking*].

Homph !

[*They go up, eating.*]

CYRANO

[*who has been watching, goes towards* RAGUENEAU].

Lulled by your voice, did you see how they were stuffing themselves ?

RAGUENEAU

[*in a low voice, smiling*].

Oh ay! I see well enough, but I never will seem to look, fearing to distress them; thus I gain a double pleasure when I recite to them my poems; for I leave those poor fellows who have not breakfasted free to eat, even while I gratify my own dearest foible, see you!

CYRANO

[*clapping him on the shoulder*].

Friend, I like you right well! . . .

[RAGUENEAU *goes after his friends.* CYRANO *follows him with his eyes, then, rather sharply.*]

Ho there! Lise!

[LISE, *who is talking tenderly to the* MUSKETEER, *starts, and comes down towards* CYRANO.]

So this fine captain is laying siege to you?

LISE

[*offended*].

One haughty glance of my eye can conquer any man that should dare venture aught 'gainst my virtue.

CYRANO.

Pooh! Conquering eyes, methinks, are oft conquered eyes.

LISE

[*choking with anger*].

But——

CYRANO

[*incisively*].

I like Ragueneau well, and so—mark me, Dame Lise—I permit not that he be rendered a laughing-stock by any . . .

LISE.

But . . .

CYRANO

[*who has raised his voice so as to be heard by the gallant*].

A word to the wise . . .

[*He bows to the* MUSKETEER, *and goes to the doorway to watch, after looking at the clock.*]

LISE

[*to the* MUSKETEER, *who has merely bowed in answer to* CYRANO'S *bow*].

How now? Is this your courage? . . . Why turn you not a jest on his nose?

THE MUSKETEER.

On his nose? . . . ay, ay . . . his nose.

[*He goes quickly further away;* LISE *follows him.*]

CYRANO

[*from the doorway, signing to* RAGUENEAU *to draw the* POETS *away*].

Hist! . . .

RAGUENEAU

[*showing them the door on the right*].

We shall be more private there . . .

CYRANO

[*impatiently*].

Hist! Hist! . . .

RAGUENEAU

[*drawing them further*].

To read poetry, 'tis better here . . .

FIRST POET

[*despairingly, with his mouth full*].

What! leave the cakes? . . .

SECOND POET.

Never! Let's take them with us!

[*They all follow* RAGUENEAU *in procession, after sweeping all the cakes off the trays.*]

SCENE V

CYRANO, ROXANE, *the* DUENNA.

CYRANO.

Ah! if I see but the faint glimmer of hope, then I draw out my letter!

[ROXANE, *masked, followed by the* DUENNA, *appears at the glass pane of the door. He opens quickly.*]

Enter! . . . [*Walking up to the* DUENNA.] Two words with you, Duenna.

THE DUENNA.

Four, Sir, an it like you.

CYRANO.

Are you fond of sweet things?

THE DUENNA.

Ay, I could eat myself sick on them!

CYRANO

[*catching up some of the paper bags from the counter*].

Good. See you these two sonnets of Monsieur Beuserade . . .

THE DUENNA.

Hey?

CYRANO.

. . . Which I fill for you with cream cakes!

THE DUENNA

[*changing her expression*].

Ha!

CYRANO.

What say you to the cake they call a little puff?

THE DUENNA.

If made with cream, Sir, I love them passing well

CYRANO.

Here I plunge six for your eating into the bosom of a poem by Saint Amant! And in these verses of Chapelain I glide a lighter morsel. Stay, love you hot cakes?

THE DUENNA.

Ay, to the core of my heart!

CYRANO

[*filling her arms with the bags*].

Pleasure me then; go eat them all in the street.

THE DUENNA.

But . . .

CYRANO

[*pushing her out*].

And come not back till the very last crumb be eaten!

[*He shuts the door, comes down towards* ROXANE, *and, uncovering, stands at a respectful distance from her.*]

SCENE VI

CYRANO, ROXANE.

CYRANO.

Blessed be the moment when you condescend,—
Remembering that humbly I exist—
To come to meet me, and to say . . . to tell? . .

ROXANE

[*who has unmasked*].

To thank you first of all. That dandy count,
Whom you checkmated in brave sword-play
Last night, . . . he is the man whom a great lord,
Desirous of my favour . . .

CYRANO.

Ha, De Guiche?

ROXANE.

[*casting down her eyes*].

Sought to impose on me . . . for husband . . .

CYRANO.

Aÿ!

Husband!—dupe-husband! . . . Husband *à-la-mode*!

[*Bowing.*]

Then I fought, happy chance! sweet lady, not
For my ill favour—but your favours fair!

ROXANE.

Confession next! . . . But, ere I make my shrift,
You must be once again that brother-friend
With whom I used to play by the lake-side! . . .

CYRANO.

Ay, you would come each spring to Bergerac!

ROXANE.

Mind you the reeds you cut to make your swords? . . .

CYRANO.

While you wove corn-straw plaits for your dolls' hair!

ROXANE.

Those were the days of games! . . .

CYRANO.

And blackberries! . .

ROXANE.

In those days you did everything I bid ! . . .

CYRANO.

Roxane, in her short frock, was Madeleine . . .

ROXANE.

Was I fair then ?

CYRANO.

You were not ill to see !

ROXANE.

Ofttimes, with hands all bloody from a fall,
You 'd run to me ! Then—aping mother ways—
I, in a voice would-be severe, would chide,—
[*She takes his hand.*]
' What is this scratch, again, that I see here ?'
[*She starts, surprised.*]
Oh ! 'tis too much ! What 's this ?
[CYRANO *tries to draw away his hand.*]
No, let me see !
At your age, fie !—Where did you get that scratch ?

CYRANO.

I got it—playing at the Porte de Nesle.

ROXANE

[*seating herself by the table, and dipping her handkerchief in a glass of water*].

Give here !

CYRANO
[*sitting by her*].
So soft! so gay maternal-sweet!

ROXANE.
And tell me while I wipe away the blood,
How many 'gainst you?

CYRANO.
Oh! a hundred—near.

ROXANE.
Come, tell me!

CYRANO.
No, let be. But you, come tell
The thing, just now, you dared not . . .

ROXANE
[*keeping his hand*].
Now, I dare!
The scent of those old days emboldens me!
Yes, now I dare. Listen. I am in love.

CYRANO.
Ah! . . .

ROXANE.
But with one who knows not.

CYRANO.
Ah! . . .

ROXANE.
Not yet.

CYRANO.

Ah . . .

ROXANE.

But who, if he knows not, soon shall learn.

CYRANO.

Ah ! . . .

ROXANE.

A poor youth who all this time has loved
Timidly, from afar, and dares not speak . . .

CYRANO.

Ah ! . . .

ROXANE.

Leave your hand ; why, it is fever-hot !——
But I have seen love trembling on his lips.

CYRANO.

Ah ! . . .

ROXANE

[*bandaging his hand with her handkerchief*].

And to think of it ! that he by chance—
Yes, cousin, he is of your regiment !

CYRANO.

Ah ! . . .

ROXANE

[*laughing*].

—Is cadet in your own company !

CYRANO.

Ah ! . . .

ROXANE.

On his brow he bears the genius-stamp;
He is proud, noble, young, intrepid, fair . . .

CYRANO

[*rising suddenly, very pale*].

Fair!

ROXANE.

Why, what ails you?

CYRANO.

Nothing; 'tis . . .
[*He shows his hand, smiling.*]
This scratch!

ROXANE.

I love him; all is said. But you must know
I have only seen him at the Comedy . . .

CYRANO.

How? You have never spoken?

ROXANE.

Eyes can speak.

CYRANO.

How know you then that he . . .?

ROXANE.

Oh! people talk
Neath the limes in the Place Royale . . . Gossip's chat
Has let me know . . .

CYRANO.

He is cadet?

ROXANE.

In the Guards.

CYRANO.

His name?

ROXANE.

Baron Christian de Neuvillette.

CYRANO.

How now? . . . He is not of the Guards!

ROXANE.

To-day
He is to join your ranks, under Captain
Carbon de Castel-Jaloux.

CYRANO.

Ah, how quick,
How quick the heart has flown! . . . But, my poor child . . .

THE DUENNA

[*opening the door*].

The cakes are eaten, Monsieur Bergerac!

CYRANO.

Then read the verses printed on the bags!

[*She goes out.*]

. . . My poor child, you who love but flowing words,
Bright wit,—what if he be a lout unskilled?

ROXANE.

No, his bright locks, like D'Urfe's heroes . . .

CYRANO.

Ah!
A well-curled pate, and witless tongue, perchance!

ROXANE.

Ah no! I guess—I feel—his words are fair!

CYRANO.

All words are fair, that lurk 'neath fair moustache!
—Suppose he were a fool! . . .

ROXANE

[*stamping her foot*].

Then bury me!

CYRANO

[*after a pause*].

Was it to tell me this you brought me here?
I fail to see what use this serves, Madame.

ROXANE.

Nay, but I felt a terror, here, in the heart,
On learning yesterday you were Gascons
All of your company . . .

CYRANO.

And we provoke
All beardless sprigs that favour dares admit
'Midst us pure Gascons—(pure! Heaven save the mark!)
They told you that as well?

ROXANE.

Ah! Think how I
Trembled for him!

CYRANO

[*between his teeth*].

Not causelessly!

ROXANE.

But when
Last night I saw you,—brave, invincible,—
Punish that dandy, fearless hold your own
Against those brutes, I thought—I thought, if he
Whom all fear, all—if he would only . . .

CYRANO.

Good.
I will befriend your little Baron.

ROXANE.

Ah!
You'll promise me you will do this for me?
I've always held you as a tender friend.

CYRANO.

Ay, ay.

ROXANE.

Then you will be his friend?

CYRANO.

I swear!

ROXANE.

And he shall fight no duels, promise!

CYRANO.

None.

ROXANE.

You are kind, cousin! Now I must be gone.

[*She puts on her mask and veil quickly; then, absently*]

You have not told me of your last night's fray.
Ah, but it must have been a hero-fight! . . .
—Bid him to write.

[*She sends him a kiss with her fingers.*]

How good you are!

CYRANO.

Ay! ay!

ROXANE.

A hundred men against you? Now, farewell.—
We are great friends?

CYRANO.

Ay, ay!

ROXANE.

Oh, bid him write!
You 'll tell me all one day—A hundred men!—
Ah, brave! . . . How brave!

CYRANO

[*bowing to her*].

I have fought better since.

[*She goes out.* CYRANO *stands motionless, with eyes on the ground. A silence. The door* (*R.*) *opens.* RAGUENEAU *looks in.*]

SCENE VII

CYRANO, RAGUENEAU, POETS, CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX, *the* CADETS, *a crowd, then* DE GUICHE.

RAGUENEAU.

Can we come in?

CYRANO

[*without stirring*].

Yes . . .

[RAGUENEAU *signs to his friends, and they come in. At the same time, by door at back, enters* CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX, *in Captain's uniform. He makes gestures of surprise on seeing* CYRANO.]

CARBON.

Here he is!

CYRANO

[*raising his head*].

Captain! . .

CARBON

[*delightedly*].

Our hero! We heard all! Thirty or more
Of my cadets are there! . . .

CYRANO

[*shrinking back*].

But . . .

CARBON

[*trying to draw him away*].

Come with me!
They will not rest until they see you!

CYRANO.

No!

CARBON.

They're drinking opposite, at *The Bear's Head.*

CYRANO.

I . . .

CARBON

[*going to the door and calling across the street in a voice of thunder*].

He won't come! The hero's in the sulks!

A VOICE

[*outside*].

Ah! *Sandious!*

[*Tumult outside. Noise of boots and swords is heard approaching.*]

CARBON

[*rubbing his hands*].

They are running 'cross the street!

CADETS

[*entering*].

Mille dious! Capdedious! Pocapdedious!

RAGUENEAU

[*drawing back startled*].

Gentlemen, are you all from Gascony?

THE CADETS.

All!

A CADET

[*to* CYRANO].

Bravo!

CYRANO.

Baron !

ANOTHER

[*shaking his hands*].

Vivat !

CYRANO.

Baron !

THIRD CADET.

Come !

I must embrace you !

CYRANO.

Baron !

SEVERAL GASCONS.

We 'll embrace

Him, all in turn !

CYRANO

[*not knowing whom to reply to*].

Baron ! . . . Baron ! . . . I beg . .

RAGUENEAU.

Are you all Barons, Sirs ?

THE CADETS.

Ay, every one !

RAGUENEAU.

Is it true ? . . .

FIRST CADET.

Ay,—why, you could build a tower

With nothing but our coronets, my friend !

LE BRET

[*entering, and running up to* CYRANO].

They 're looking for you! Here 's a crazy mob
Led by the men who followed you last night . . .

CYRANO

[*alarmed*].

What! Have you told them where to find me?

LE BRET

[*rubbing his hands*].

Yes!

A BOURGEOIS

[*entering, followed by a group of men*].

Sir, all the Marais is a-coming here!

[*Outside the street has filled with people. Chaises à porteurs and carriages have drawn up.*]

LE BRET

[*in a low voice, smiling, to* CYRANO].

And Roxane?

CYRANO

[*quickly*].

Hush!

THE CROWD

[*calling outside*].

Cyrano! . . .

[*A crowd rush into the shop, pushing one another. Acclamations.*]

RAGUENEAU

[*standing on a table*].

Lo! my shop
Invaded! They break all! Magnificent!

PEOPLE

[*crowding round* CYRANO].

My friend! . . . my friend . . .

CYRANO.

Meseems that yesterday
I had not all these friends!

LE BRET

[*delighted*].

Success!

A YOUNG MARQUIS

[*hurrying up with his hands held out*].

My friend,
Didst thou but know . . .

CYRANO.

Thou! . . . Marry! . . . thou! . . . Pray when
Did we herd swine together, you and I?

ANOTHER.

I would present you, Sir, to some fair dames
Who in my carriage yonder . . .

CYRANO

[*coldly*].

Ah! and who
Will first present you, Sir, to me?

LE BRET
[*astonished*].
What's wrong?

CYRANO.
Hush!

A MAN OF LETTERS
[*with writing-board*].
A few details? . . .

CYRANO.
No.

LE BRET
[*nudging his elbow*].
'Tis Theophrast,
Renaudet, . . . of the *Court Gazette*!

CYRANO.
Who cares?

LE BRET.
This paper—but it is of great importance! . . .
They say it will be an immense success!

A POET
[*advancing*].
Sir . . .

CYRANO.
What, another!

THE POET.
. . . Pray permit I make
A pentacrostic on your name . . .

SOME ONE
[*also advancing*].
Pray, Sir . . .

CYRANO.

Enough! enough!

[*A movement in the crowd.* DE GUICHE *appears, escorted by officers.* CUIGY, BRISSAILLE, *the* OFFICERS *who went with* CYRANO *the night before.* CUIGY *comes rapidly up to* CYRANO.]

CUIGY *to* CYRANO.

Here is Monsieur de Guiche!

[*A murmur—every one makes way.*]

He comes from the Marshal of Gassion!

DE GUICHE

[*bowing to* CYRANO].

. . . Who would express his admiration, Sir,
For your new exploit noised so loud abroad.

THE CROWD.

Bravo!

CYRANO

[*bowing*].

The Marshal is a judge of valour.

DE GUICHE.

He could not have believed the thing, unless
These gentlemen had sworn they witnessed it.

CUIGY.

With our own eyes!

LE BRET

[*aside to* CYRANO, *who has an absent air*].

But . . . you . . .

CYRANO.

Hush!

LE BRET

But . . . You suffer?

CYRANO

[*starting*].

Before this rabble?——I? . . .

[*He draws himself up, twirls his moustache, and throws back his shoulders.*]

Wait! . . . You shall see!

DE GUICHE

[*to whom* CUIGY *has spoken in a low voice*].

In feats of arms, already your career
Abounded.—You serve with those crazy pates
Of Gascons?

CYRANO

Ay, with the Cadets.

A CADET

[*in a terrible voice*].

With us!

DE GUICHE

[*looking at the* CADETS, *ranged behind* CYRANO].

Ah! . . . All these gentlemen of haughty mien,
Are they the famous? . . .

CARBON.

Cyrano!

CYRANO.

Ay, Captain!

CARBON.

Since all my company's assembled here,
Pray favour me,—present them to my lord!

CYRANO

[*making two steps towards* DE GUICHE].

My lord de Guiche, permit that I present—

[*Pointing to the* CADETS.]

The bold Cadets of Gascony,
Of Carbon of Castel-Jaloux !
Brawling and swaggering boastfully,
The bold Cadets of Gascony !
Spouting of Armoury, Heraldry,
Their veins a-brimming with blood so blue,
The bold Cadets of Gascony,
Of Carbon of Castel-Jaloux :

Eagle-eye, and spindle-shanks,
Fierce moustache, and wolfish tooth !
Slash-the-rabble and scatter-their-ranks ;
Eagle-eye, and spindle-shanks,
With a flaming feather that gaily pranks,
Hiding the holes in their hats, forsooth !
Eagle-eye, and spindle-shanks,
Fierce moustache, and wolfish tooth !

'Pink-your-Doublet' and 'Slit-your-Trunk'
Are their gentlest sobriquets ;
With Fame and Glory their soul is drunk !
'Pink-your-Doublet' and 'Slit-your-Trunk,'
In brawl and skirmish they show their spunk,
Give rendezvous in broil and fray ;
'Pink-your-Doublet' and 'Slit-your-Trunk'
Are their gentlest sobriquets !

What, ho ! Cadets of Gascony !
All jealous lovers are sport for you !
O Woman ! dear divinity !
What, ho ! Cadets of Gascony !

Whom scowling husbands quake to see.
Blow, 'tararara,' and cry 'Cuckoo.'
What, ho! Cadets of Gascony!
Husbands and lovers are game for you!

DE GUICHE

[*seated with haughty carelessness in an arm-chair brought quickly by* RAGUENEAU].

A poet! 'Tis the fashion of the hour!
—Will you be mine?

CYRANO.

No, Sir,—no man's!

DE GUICHE.

Last night
Your fancy pleased my uncle Richelieu.
I'll gladly say a word to him for you.

LE BRET

[*overjoyed*].

Great Heavens!

DE GUICHE.

I imagine you have rhymed
Five acts, or so?

LE BRET

[*in* CYRANO'S *ear*].

Your play!—your *Agrippine*!
You'll see it staged at last!

DE GUICHE.

Take them to him.

CYRANO

[*beginning to be tempted and attracted*].

In sooth,—I would . . .

DE GUICHE.

He is a critic skilled :
He may correct a line or two, at most.

CYRANO

[*whose face stiffens at once*].

Impossible ! My blood congeals to think
That other hand should change a comma's dot.

DE GUICHE.

But when a verse approves itself to him
He pays it dear, good friend.

CYRANO.

He pays less dear
Than I myself ; when a verse pleases me
I pay myself, and sing it to myself !

DE GUICHE.

You are proud.

CYRANO.

Really ? You have noticed that ?

A CADET

[*entering, with a string of old battered plumed beaver hats, full of holes, slung on his sword*].

See, Cyrano,—this morning, on the quay
What strange bright-feathered game we caught ! The hats
O' the fugitives . . .

CARBON.

'*Spolia opima!*

ALL

[*laughing*].

Ah! ah! ah!

CUIGY.

He who laid that ambush, 'faith!
Must curse and swear!

BRISSAILLE.

Who was it?

DE GUICHE.

I myself.

[*The laughter stops.*]

I charged them—work too dirty for my sword,
To punish and chastise a rhymster sot.

[*Constrained silence.*]

THE CADET

[*in a low voice, to* CYRANO, *showing him the beavers*].

What do with them? They're full of grease!—a stew?

CYRANO

[*taking the sword and, with a salute, dropping the hats at* DE GUICHE'S *feet*].

Sir, pray be good enough to render them
Back to your friends.

DE GUICHE

[*rising, sharply*].

My chair there—quick!—I go!

[*To* CYRANO *passionately.*]

As to you, sirrah! . . .

VOICE
[*in the street*].
Porters for my lord
De Guiche !

DE GUICHE
[*who has controlled himself—smiling*].
Have you read *Don Quixote* ?

CYRANO.
I have !
And doff my hat at th' mad knight-errant's name.

DE GUICHE.
I counsel you to study . . .

A PORTER
[*appearing at back*].
My lord's chair !

DE GUICHE.
. . . The windmill chapter !

CYRANO
[*bowing*].
Chapter the Thirteenth.

DE GUICHE.
For when one tilts 'gainst windmills—it may chance . . .

CYRANO.
Tilt I 'gainst those who change with every breeze ?

DE GUICHE.

. . . That windmill sails may sweep you with their arm
Down—in the mire ! . . .

CYRANO.

Or upward—to the stars !

[DE GUICHE *goes out, and mounts into his chair. The other lords go away whispering together.* LE BRET *goes to the door with them. The crowd disperses.*]

SCENE VIII

CYRANO, LE BRET, *the* CADETS, *who are eating and drinking at the tables R. and L.*

CYRANO

[*bowing mockingly to those who go out without daring to salute him*].

Gentlemen . . . Gentlemen . . .

LE BRET

[*coming back, despairingly*].

Here 's a fine coil !

CYRANO.

Oh ! scold away !

LE BRET.

At least, you will agree
That to annihilate each chance of Fate
Exaggerates . . .

CYRANO.

Yes !—I exaggerate !

LE BRET

[*triumphantly*].

Ah !

CYRANO.

But for principle—example too,—
I think 'tis well thus to exaggerate.

LE BRET.

Oh! lay aside that pride of musketeer,
Fortune and glory wait you! . . .

CYRANO.

Ay, and then? . . .
Seek a protector, choose a patron out,
And like the crawling ivy round a tree
That licks the bark to gain the trunk's support,
Climb high by creeping ruse instead of force?
No, grammercy! What! I, like all the rest
Dedicate verse to bankers?—play buffoon
In cringing hope to see, at last, a smile
Not disapproving, on a patron's lips?
Grammercy, no! What! learn to swallow toads?
—With frame aweary climbing stairs?—a skin
Grown grimed and horny,—here, about the knees?
And, acrobat-like, teach my back to bend?—
No, grammercy! Or,—double-faced and sly—
Run with the hare, while hunting with the hounds;
And, oily-tongued, to win the oil of praise,
Flatter the great man to his very nose?
No, grammercy! Steal soft from lap to lap,
—A little great man in a circle small,
Or navigate, with madrigals for sails,
Blown gently windward by old ladies' sighs?
No, grammercy! Bribe kindly editors
To spread abroad my verses? Grammercy!
Or try to be elected as the pope
Of tavern-councils held by imbeciles?

No, grammercy! Toil to gain reputation
By one small sonnet, 'stead of making many?
No, grammercy! Or flatter sorry bunglers?
Be terrorised by every prating paper?
Say ceaselessly, 'Oh had I but the chance
Of a fair notice in the *Mercury*!
Grammercy, no! Grow pale, fear, calculate?
Prefer to make a visit to a rhyme?
Seek introductions, draw petitions up?
No, grammercy! and no! and no again! But—sing?
Dream, laugh, go lightly, solitary, free,
With eyes that look straight forward—fearless voice!
To cock your beaver just the way you choose,—
For 'yes' or 'no' show fight, or turn a rhyme!
—To work without one thought of gain or fame,
To realise that journey to the moon!
Never to pen a line that has not sprung
Straight from the heart within. Embracing then
Modesty, say to oneself, 'Good my friend,
Be thou content with flowers,—fruit,—nay, leaves,
But pluck them from no garden but thine own!'
And then, if glory come by chance your way,
To pay no tribute unto Cæsar, none,
But keep the merit all your own! In short,
Disdaining tendrils of the parasite,
To be content, if neither oak nor elm—
Not to mount high, perchance, but mount alone!

LE BRET.

Alone, an if you will! But not with hand
'Gainst every man! How in the devil's name
Have you conceived this lunatic idea,
To make foes for yourself at every turn?

CYRANO.

By dint of seeing you at every turn
Make friends,—and fawn upon your frequent friends
With mouth wide smiling, slit from ear to ear!
I pass, still unsaluted, joyfully,
And cry,—What, ho! another enemy?

LE BRET.

Lunacy!

CYRANO.

Well, what if it be my vice,
My pleasure to displease—to love men hate me!
Ah, friend of mine, believe me, I march better
'Neath the cross-fire of glances inimical!
How droll the stains one sees on fine-laced doublets,
From gall of envy, or the poltroon's drivel!
—The enervating friendship which enfolds you
Is like an open laced Italian collar,
Floating around your neck in woman's fashion;
One is at ease thus,—but less proud the carriage!
The forehead, free from mainstay or coercion,
Bends here, there, everywhere. But I, embracing
Hatred, she lends,—forbidding, stiffly fluted,
The ruff's starched folds that hold the head so rigid;
Each enemy—another fold—a gopher,
Who adds constraint, and adds a ray of glory;
For Hatred, like the ruff worn by the Spanish,
Grips like a vice, but frames you like a halo!

LE BRET

[*after a silence, taking his arm*].

Speak proud aloud, and bitter!—In my ear
Whisper me simply this,—She loves thee not!

CYRANO
[*vehemently*].

Hush!

[CHRISTIAN *has just entered, and mingled with the* CADETS, *who do not speak to him; he has seated himself at a table, where* LISE *serves him.*]

SCENE IX

CYRANO, LE BRET, *the* CADETS, CHRISTIAN DE NEUVILLETTE.

A CADET
[*seated at a table, glass in hand*].

Cyrano!

[CYRANO *turns round.*]

The story!

CYRANO.

In its time!

[*He goes up on* LE BRET'S *arm. They talk in low voices.*]

THE CADET
[*rising and coming down*].

The story of the fray! 'Twill lesson well

[*He stops before the table where* CHRISTIAN *is seated.*]

This timid young apprentice!

CHRISTIAN
[*raising his head*].

'Prentice! Who?

ANOTHER CADET.

This sickly Northern greenhorn!

CHRISTIAN

Sickly!

FIRST CADET

[*mockingly*].

Hark!

Monsieur de Neuvillette, this in your ear:
There's somewhat here, one no more dares to name,
Than to say 'rope' to one whose sire was hanged!

CHRISTIAN.

What may that be?

ANOTHER CADET

[*in a terrible voice*]

See here!

[*He puts his finger three times, mysteriously, on his nose.*]

Do you understand?

CHRISTIAN.

Oh! 'tis the . . .

ANOTHER.

Hush! oh, never breathe that word,
Unless you'd reckon with him yonder!

[*He points to* CYRANO, *who is talking with* LE BRET.]

ANOTHER

[*who has meanwhile come up noiselessly to sit on the table—whispering behind him*].

Hark!

He put two snuffling men to death, in rage,
For the sole reason they spoke through their nose!

ANOTHER

[*in a hollow voice, darting on all-fours from under the table, where he had crept*].

And if you would not perish in flower o' youth,
—Oh, mention not the fatal cartilage!

ANOTHER

[*clapping him on the shoulder*].

A word? A gesture! For the indiscreet
His handkerchief may prove his winding-sheet!

[*Silence. All, with crossed arms, look at* CHRISTIAN. *He rises and goes over to* CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX, *who is talking to an* OFFICER, *and feigns to see nothing.*]

CHRISTIAN.

Captain!

CARBON

[*turning and looking at him from head to foot*].

Sir!

CHRISTIAN.

Pray, what skills it best to do
To Southerners who swagger? . . .

CARBON.

Give them proof
That one may be a Northerner, yet brave!

[*He turns his back on him.*]

CHRISTIAN.

I thank you.

FIRST CADET

[*to* CYRANO].

Now, the tale!

ALL.

The tale!

CYRANO

[*coming towards them.*]

The tale? . . .

[*All bring their stools up, and group round him, listening eagerly.* CHRISTIAN *is astride a chair.*]

Well! I went all alone to meet the band.
The moon was shining, clock-like, full i' th' sky,
When, suddenly, some careful clockwright passed
A cloud of cotton-wool across the case
That held this silver watch. And, presto! heigh!
The night was inky black, and all the quays
Were hidden in the murky dark. Gadsooks!
One could see nothing further . . .

CHRISTIAN.

Than one's nose!

[*Silence. All slowly rise, looking in terror at* CYRANO, *who has stopped—dumfounded. Pause.*]

CYRANO.

Who on God's earth is that?

A CADET.

[*whispering*].

It is a man
Who joined to-day.

CYRANO

[*making a step towards* CHRISTIAN].

To-day?

CARBON

[*in a low voice*].

Yes . . . his name is
The Baron de Neuvil . . .

CYRANO

[*checking himself*].

Good! it is well . . .

[*He turns pale, flushes, makes as if to fall on* CHRISTIAN.]

I . . .

[*He controls himself.*]

What said I? . . .

[*With a burst of rage.*]

Mordious! . . .

[*Then continues calmly.*]

That it was dark.

[*Astonishment. The* CADETS *reseat themselves, staring at him.*]

On I went, thinking, 'For a knavish cause
I may provoke some great man, some great prince,
Who certainly could break' . .

CHRISTIAN.

My nose! . . .

[*Every one starts up.* CHRISTIAN *balances on his chair.*]

CYRANO

[*in a choked voice*].

. . . 'My teeth!
Who would break my teeth, and I, imprudent-like,
Was poking . . .'

CHRISTIAN.

My nose ! . . .

CYRANO

'My finger, . . . in the crack
Between the tree and bark ! He may prove strong
And rap me . . .'

CHRISTIAN

Over the nose . . .

CYRANO

[*wiping his forehead*].

. . . 'O' th' knuckles ! Ay,'
But I cried, 'Forward, Gascon ! Duty calls !
On, Cyrano !' And thus I ventured on . . .
When, from the shadow, came . . .

CHRISTIAN.

A crack o' th' nose.

CYRANO

I parry it—find myself . . .

CHRISTIAN.

Nose to nose. . . .

CYRANO

[*bounding on to him*].

Heaven and earth ?

[*All the Gascons leap up to see, but when he is close to* CHRISTIAN *he controls himself and continues.*]

. . . With a hundred brawling sots,
Who stank . . .

CHRISTIAN.

A noseful . . .

CYRANO

[*white, but smiling*].

Onions, brandy-cups !
I leapt out, head well down . . .

CHRISTIAN.

Nosing the wind !

CYRANO.

I charge !—gore two, impale one—run him through,
One aims at me—Paf ! and I parry . . .

CHRISTIAN.

Pif !

CYRANO

[*bursting out*].

Great God ! Out ! all of you !

[*The* CADETS *rush to the doors.*]

FIRST CADET.

The tiger wakes !

CYRANO.

Every man, out ! Leave me alone with him !

SECOND CADET.

We shall find him minced fine, minced into hash
In a big pasty !

RAGUENEAU.

I am turning pale,
And curl up, like a napkin, limp and white !

CARBON.

Let us be gone.

ANOTHER.

He will not leave a crumb !

ANOTHER.

I die of fright to think what will pass here !

ANOTHER

[*shutting door R.*].

Something too horrible !

[*All have gone out by different doors, some by the staircase.* CYRANO *and* CHRISTIAN *are face to face, looking at each other for a moment.*]

SCENE X

CYRANO, CHRISTIAN.

CYRANO.

Embrace me now !

CHRISTIAN.

Sir . . .

CYRANO.

You are brave.

CHRISTIAN

Oh ! but . .

CYRANO.

Nay, I insist.

CHRISTIAN.

Pray tell me . . .

CYRANO.

Come, embrace ! I am her brother

CHRISTIAN.

Whose brother?

CYRANO.

Hers, i' faith! Roxane's!

CHRISTIAN

[*rushing up to him*].

O heavens!

Her brother . . .?

CYRANO.

Cousin-brother! . . . the same thing!

CHRISTIAN.

And she has told you . ?

CYRANO

All!

CHRISTIAN.

She loves me? say!

CYRANO.

Maybe!

CHRISTIAN

[*taking his hands*].

How glad I am to meet you, Sir!

CYRANO.

That may be called a sudden sentiment!

CHRISTIAN.

I ask your pardon . . .

CYRANO

[*looking at him, with his hand on his shoulder*].

True, he's fair, the villain!

CHRISTIAN.

Ah, Sir! If you but knew my admiration! . . .

CYRANO.

But all those noses? . . .

CHRISTIAN.

Oh! I take them back!

CYRANO.

Roxane expects a letter.

CHRISTIAN.

Woe the day!

CYRANO.

How?

CHRISTIAN.

I am lost if I but ope my lips!

CYRANO.

Why so?

CHRISTIAN.

I am a fool—could die for shame!

CYRANO.

None is a fool who knows himself a fool.
And you did not attack me like a fool.

CHRISTIAN.

Bah! One finds battle-cry to lead th' assault!
I have a certain military wit,
But, before women, can but hold my tongue.
Their eyes! True, when I pass, their eyes are kind

CYRANO.

And, when you stay, their hearts, methinks, are kinder?

CHRISTIAN.

No! for I am one of those men—tongue-tied,
I know it—who can never tell their love.

CYRANO.

And I, meseems, had Nature been more kind,
More careful, when she fashioned me,—had been
One of those men who well could speak their love!

CHRISTIAN.

Oh to express one's thoughts with facile grace! . . .

CYRANO.

. . . To be a musketeer, with handsome face!

CHRISTIAN.

Roxane is *précieuse*. I'm sure to prove
A disappointment to her!

CYRANO
[*looking at him*].

Had I but
Such an interpreter to speak my soul!

CHRISTIAN
[*with despair*].

Eloquence! Where to find it?

CYRANO
[*abruptly*].

That I lend,
If you lend me your handsome victor-charms;
Blended we make a hero of romance!

CHRISTIAN.

How so?

CYRANO.

Think you you can repeat what things
I daily teach your tongue? . . .

CHRISTIAN.

What do you mean? . . .

CYRANO.

Roxane shall never have a disillusion!
Say, wilt thou that we woo her, double-handed?
Wilt thou that we two woo her, both together?
Feel'st thou, passing from my leather doublet,
Through thy laced doublet, all my soul inspiring?

CHRISTIAN.

But, Cyrano! . . .

CYRANO.

Will you, I say?

CHRISTIAN.

I fear!

CYRANO.

Since, by yourself, you fear to chill her heart,
Will you—to kindle all her heart to flame—
Wed into one my phrases and your lips?

CHRISTIAN.

Your eyes flash!

CYRANO.

Will you?

CHRISTIAN.

Will it please you so?
—Give you such pleasure?

CYRANO.

[*madly*].

It! . . .

[*Then calmly, business-like.*]

It would amuse me!
It is an enterprise to tempt a poet.
Will you complete me, and let me complete you?
You march victorious,—I go in your shadow;
Let me be wit for you, be you my beauty!

CHRISTIAN.

The letter, that she waits for even now!
I never can . . .

CYRANO.

[*taking out the letter he had written*].

See! Here it is—your letter!

CHRISTIAN.

What?

CYRANO.

Take it! Look, it wants but the address.

CHRISTIAN.

But I . . .

CYRANO.

Fear nothing. Send it. It will suit.

CHRISTIAN.

But have you . . .?

CYRANO.

Oh! we have our pockets full,
We poets, of love-letters, writ to Chloes,
Daphnes—creations of our noddle-heads.
Our lady-loves,—phantasms of our brains,
—Dream-fancies blown into soap-bubbles! Come!
Take it, and change feigned love-words into true;
I breathed my sighs and moans haphazard-wise;
Call all these wandering love-birds home to nest.
You 'll see that I was in these lettered lines,
—Eloquent all the more, the less sincere!
—Take it, and make an end!

CHRISTIAN.

Were it not well
To change some words? Written haphazard-wise,
Will it fit Roxane?

CYRANO.

'Twill fit like a glove!

CHRISTIAN.

But . . .

CYRANO.

Ah, credulity of love! Roxane
Will think each word inspired by herself!

CHRISTIAN.

My friend!

[*He throws himself into* CYRANO'S *arms.*
They remain thus.]

SCENE XI

CYRANO, CHRISTIAN, *the* GASCONS, *the* MUSKETEER, LISE.

A CADET

[*half opening the door*].

Nought here! . . . The silence of the grave!
I dare not look . .

[*He puts his head in.*]

Why? . . .

ALL THE CADETS

[*entering, and seeing* CYRANO *and* CHRISTIAN *embracing*].

Oh! . . .

A CADET.

This passes all!

[*Consternation.*]

THE MUSKETEER

[*mockingly*].

Ho, ho! . . .

CARBON.

Our demon has become a saint?
Struck on one nostril—lo! he turns the other!

MUSKETEER.

Then we may speak about his nose, henceforth! . . .

[*Calling to* LISE, *boastfully.*]

—Ah, Lise, see here!

[*Sniffing ostentatiously.*]

O heavens! . . . what a stink! . . .

[*Going up to* CYRANO.]
You, sir, without a doubt have sniffed it up!
—What is the smell I notice here?

CYRANO
[*cuffing his head*].
Clove-heads.

[*General delight. The* CADETS *have found the old* CYRANO *again! They turn somersaults*.]

CURTAIN.

ACT III

ROXANE'S KISS.

A small square in the old Marais. Old houses. A perspective of little streets. On the right ROXANE'S *house and the wall of her garden overhung with thick foliage. Window and balcony over the door. A bench in front.*

From the bench and the stones jutting out of the wall it is easy to climb to the balcony. In front an old house in the same style of brick and stone. The knocker of this door is bandaged with linen like a sore thumb.

At the rising of the curtain the DUENNA *is seated on the bench.*

The window on ROXANE'S *balcony is wide open.*

RAGUENEAU *is standing near the door in a sort of livery. He has just finished relating something to the* DUENNA, *and is wiping his eyes.*

SCENE I

RAGUENEAU, *the* DUENNA. *Then* ROXANE, CYRANO, *and two* PAGES.

RAGUENEAU.

—And then, off she went, with a musketeer! Deserted and ruined too, I would make an end of all, and so hanged myself. My last breath was drawn :—then in comes Monsieur de Bergerac! He

cuts me down, and begs his cousin to take me for her steward.

THE DUENNA.

Well, but how came it about that you were thus ruined?

RAGUENEAU.

Oh! Lise loved the warriors, and I loved the poets! What cakes there were that Apollo chanced to leave were quickly snapped up by Mars. - Thus ruin was not long a-coming.

THE DUENNA

[*rising, and calling up to the open window*].

Roxane, are you ready? They wait for us!

ROXANE'S VOICE

[*from the window*].

I will but put me on a cloak!

THE DUENNA

[*to* RAGUENEAU, *showing him the door opposite*].

They wait us there opposite, at Clomire's house. She receives them all there to-day—the *précieuses*, the poets; they read a discourse on the Tender Passion.

RAGUENEAU.

The Tender Passion?

THE DUENNA

[*in a mincing voice*].

Ay, indeed! [*Calling up to the window.*] Roxane, an you come not down quickly, we shall miss the discourse on the Tender Passion!

ROXANE'S VOICE.

I come! I come!

[*A sound of stringed instruments approaching.*]

CYRANO'S VOICE

[*behind the scenes, singing*].

La, la, la, la!

THE DUENNA

[*surprised*].

They serenade us?

CYRANO

[*followed by two* PAGES *with arch-lutes*].

I tell you they are demi-semi-quavers, demi-semi-fool!

FIRST PAGE

[*ironically*].

You know then, Sir, to distinguish between semi-quavers and demi-semi-quavers?

CYRANO.

Is not every disciple of Gassendi a musician?

THE PAGE

[*playing and singing*].

La, la!

CYRANO

[*snatching the lute from him, and going on with the phrase*].

In proof of which, I can continue! La, la, la, la.

ROXANE

[*appearing on the balcony*].

What? 'Tis you?

CYRANO

[*going on with the air, and singing to it*].

'Tis I, who come to serenade your lilies, and pay my *devoir* to your ro—o—oses !

ROXANE.

I am coming down !

[*She leaves the balcony.*]

THE DUENNA

[*pointing to the* PAGES].

How come these two virtuosi here ?

CYRANO.

'Tis for a wager I won of D'Assoucy. We were disputing a nice point in grammar ; contradictions raged hotly—''Tis so !' 'Nay, 'tis so !' when suddenly he shows me these two long-shanks, whom he takes about with him as an escort, and who are skilful in scratching lute-strings with their skinny claws ! 'I will wager you a day's music,' says he ! —And lost it ! Thus, see you, till Phœbus' chariot starts once again, these lute-twangers are at my heels, seeing all I do, hearing all I say, and accompanying all with melody ! 'Twas pleasant at the first, but i' faith, I begin to weary of it already !

[*To the* MUSICIANS.]

Ho there ! go serenade Montfleury for me ! Play a dance to him !

[*The* PAGES *go towards the door. To the* DUENNA.]

I have come, as is my wont, nightly, to ask Roxane whether . . .

[*To the* PAGES, *who are going out.*]

Play a long time,—and play out of tune !

[*To the* DUENNA]

. . . Whether her soul's elected is ever the same, ever faultless !

ROXANE

[*coming out of the house*].

Ah ! How handsome he is, how brilliant a wit ! And—how well I love him !

CYRANO

[*smiling*].

Christian has so brilliant a wit ?

ROXANE.

Brighter than even your own, cousin !

CYRANO.

Be it so, with all my heart !

ROXANE.

Ah ! methinks 'twere impossible that there could breathe a man on this earth skilled to say as sweetly as he all the pretty nothings that mean so much—that mean all ! At times his mind seems far away, the Muse says nought—and then, presto ! he speaks —bewitchingly ! enchantingly !

CYRANO.

[*incredulously.*]

No, no !

ROXANE.

Fie ! That is ill said ! But lo ! men are ever thus ! Because he is fair to see, you would have it that he must be dull of speech.

CYRANO.

He hath an eloquent tongue in telling his love ?

ROXANE.

In telling his love? why, 'tis not simple telling, 'tis dissertation, 'tis analysis!

CYRANO.

How is he with the pen?

ROXANE.

Still better! Listen,—here:—

[*Reciting.*]

'*The more of my poor heart you take*
The larger grows my heart!'

[*Triumphantly to* CYRANO.]

How like you those lines?

CYRANO.

Pooh!

ROXANE.

And thus it goes on . . .

'*And, since some target I must show*
For Cupid's cruel dart,
Oh, if mine own you deign to keep,
Then give me your sweet heart!

CYRANO.

Lord! first he has too much, then anon not enough! How much heart does the fellow want?

ROXANE.

You would vex a saint! . . . But 'tis your jealousy

CYRANO

[*starting*].

What mean you?

ROXANE.

Ay, your poet's jealousy! Hark now, if this again be not tender-sweet?—

'My heart to yours sends but one cry:
If kisses fast could flee
By letter, then with your sweet lips
My letters read should be!
If kisses could be writ with ink.
If kisses fast could flee!'

CYRANO

[*smiling approvingly in spite of himself*].

Ha! those last lines are,—hm! . . . hm! . .

[*Correcting himself—contemptuously.*]

—They are paltry enough!

ROXANE.

And this . . .

CYRANO

[*enchanted*].

Then you have his letters by heart?

ROXANE.

Every one of them!

CYRANO

By all oaths that can be sworn,—'tis flattering!

ROXANE.

They are the lines of a master!

CYRANO

[*modestly*].

Come, nay . . . a master? . . .

ROXANE.

Ay, I say it—a master!

CYRANO.

Good—be it so.

THE DUENNA

[*coming down quickly*].

Here comes Monsieur de Guiche!

[*To* CYRANO, *pushing him towards the house*.]

In with you! 'twere best he see you not, it might perchance put him on the scent . . .

ROXANE

[*to* CYRANO].

Ay, of my own dear secret! He loves me, and is powerful, and, if he knew, then all were lost! Marry! he could well deal a deathblow to my love!

CYRANO

[*entering the house*].

Good! good!

[DE GUICHE *appears*.]

SCENE II

ROXANE, DE GUICHE, *the* DUENNA *standing a little way off*.

ROXANE

[*curtsying to* DE GUICHE].

I was going out.

DE GUICHE.

I come to take my leave.

ROXANE.

Whither go you?

DE GUICHE.

To the war.

ROXANE.

Ah!

DE GUICHE.

Ay, to-night.

ROXANE.

Oh!

DE GUICHE.

I am ordered away. We are to besiege Arras.

ROXANE.

Ah—— to besiege? . . .

DE GUICHE.

Ay. My going moves you not, meseems.

ROXANE.

Nay . . .

DE GUICHE.

I am grieved to the core of the heart. Shall I again behold you? . . . When? I know not. Heard you that I am named commander? . . .

ROXANE

[*indifferently*].

Bravo!

DE GUICHE.

Of the Guards regiment,

ROXANE

[*startled*].

What! the Guards?

DE GUICHE.

Ay, where serves your cousin, the swaggering boaster. I will find a way to revenge myself on him at Arras.

ROXANE

[*choking*].

What mean you? The Guards go to Arras?

DE GUICHE

[*laughing*].

Bethink you, is it not my own regiment?

ROXANE

[*falling seated on the bench—aside*].

Christian!

DE GUICHE.

What ails you?

ROXANE

[*moved deeply*].

Oh—I am in despair! The man one loves!—at the war!

DE GUICHE

[*surprised and delighted*].

You say such sweet words to me! 'Tis the first time!—and just when I must quit you!

ROXANE

[*collected, and fanning herself*].

Thus,—you would fain revenge your grudge against my cousin ?

DE GUICHE.

My fair lady is on his side ?

ROXANE.

Nay,—against him !

DE GUICHE.

Do you see him often ?

ROXANE.

But very rarely.

DE GUICHE.

He is ever to be met now in company with one of the cadets, . . . one New—villen—viller——

ROXANE.

Of high stature ?

DE GUICHE

Fair-haired ?

ROXANE.

Ay, a red-headed fellow !

DE GUICHE.

Handsome ! . . .

ROXANE.

Tut !

DE GUICHE.

But dull-witted.

ROXANE.

One would think so, to look at him!

[*Changing her tone.*]

How mean you to play your revenge on Cyrano? Perchance you think to put him i' the thick of the shots? Nay, believe me, that were a poor vengeance — he would love such a post better than aught else! I know the way to wound his pride far more keenly!

DE GUICHE.

What then? tell . . .

ROXANE.

If, when the regiment march to Arras, he were left here with his beloved boon companions, the Cadets, to sit with crossed arms so long as the war lasted! There is your method, would you enrage a man of his kind; cheat him of his chance of mortal danger, and you punish him right fiercely.

DE GUICHE.

[*coming nearer*].

O woman! woman! Who but a woman had e'er devised so subtle a trick?

ROXANE.

See you not how he will eat out his heart, while his friends gnaw their thick fists for that they are deprived of the battle? So are you best avenged.

DE GUICHE.

You love me, then, a little?

[*She smiles.*]

I would fain—seeing you thus espouse my cause, Roxane—believe it a proof of love!

ROXANE.

'Tis a proof of love!

DE GUICHE

[*showing some sealed papers*].

Here are the marching orders; they will be sent instantly to each company—except—

[*He detaches one.*]

—This one! 'Tis that of the Cadets.

[*He puts it in his pocket.*]

This I keep. [*Laughing.*] Ha! ha! ha! Cyrano! His love of battle! . . . So you can play tricks on people? . . . you, of all ladies!

ROXANE.

Sometimes!

DE GUICHE

[*coming close to her*].

Oh! how I love you!—to distraction! Listen! To-night—true, I ought to start—but——how leave you now that I feel your heart is touched!——Listen! Hard by, in the Rue d'Orléans, is a convent founded by Father Athanasius, the syndic of the Capuchins. True that no layman may enter—but—I can settle that with the good Fathers!—Their habit-sleeves are wide enough to hide me in. 'Tis they who serve Richelieu's private chapel: and from respect to the uncle, fear the nephew. All will deem me gone. I will come to you, masked. Give me leave to wait till to-morrow, sweet Lady Fanciful!

ROXANE.

But, if this be rumoured, your glory . . .

DE GUICHE.

Bah!

ROXANE.

But the siege—Arras . . .

DE GUICHE.

'Twill take its chance. Grant but permission.

ROXANE.

No!

DE GUICHE.

Give me leave!

ROXANE

[*tenderly*]

It were my duty to forbid you!

DE GUICHE.

Ah!

ROXANE.

You must go! [*Aside.*] Christian stays here. [*Aloud.*] I would have you heroic—Antoine!

DE GUICHE.

O heavenly word! You love, then, him? . . .

ROXANE.

. . . For whom I trembled.

DE GUICHE

[*in an ecstasy*].

Ah! I go then! [*He kisses her hand.*] Are you content?

ROXANE.

Yes, my friend!

[*He goes out.*]

THE DUENNA

[*making behind his back a mocking curtsy*].

Yes, my friend!

ROXANE

[*to the* DUENNA].

Not a word of what I have done. Cyrano would never pardon me for stealing his fighting from him!

[*She calls towards the house.*]

Cousin!

SCENE III

ROXANE, DUENNA, CYRANO.

We are going to Clomire's house. [*She points to door opposite.*] Alcandre and Lysimon are to discourse!

THE DUENNA

[*putting her little finger in her ear*].

Yes! But my little finger tells me we shall miss them.

CYRANO.

'Twere a pity to miss such apes!

[*They have come to* CLOMIRE'S *door.*]

THE DUENNA.

Oh, see! The knocker is muffled up!

[*Speaking to the knocker.*]

So they have gagged that metal tongue of yours, little noisy one, lest it should disturb the fine orators!

[*She lifts it carefully and knocks with precaution.*]

ROXANE

[*seeing that the door opens*].

Let us enter! [*On the threshold, to* CYRANO.] If Christian comes, as I feel sure he will, bid him wait for me!

CYRANO

[*quickly, as she is going in*].

Listen!

[*She turns.*]

What mean you to question him on, as is your wont, to-night?

ROXANE.

Oh——

CYRANO

[*eagerly*].

Well, say.

ROXANE.

But you will be mute?

CYRANO.

Mute as a fish.

ROXANE.

I shall not question him at all, but say: Give rein to your fancy! Prepare not your speeches,—but speak the thoughts as they come! Speak to me of love, and speak splendidly!

CYRANO

[*smiling*].

Very good!

ROXANE.

But secret! . . .

CYRANO.

Secret.

ROXANE.

Not a word!

[*She enters and shuts the door.*]

CYRANO

[*when the door is shut, bowing to her*].

A thousand thanks!

[*The door opens again, and* ROXANE *puts her head out.*]

ROXANE.

Lest he prepare himself!

CYRANO.

The devil!——no, no!

BOTH TOGETHER.

Secret.

[*The door shuts.*]

CYRANO

[*calling*].

Christian!

SCENE IV

CYRANO, CHRISTIAN.

CYRANO.

I know all that is needful. Here's occasion
For you to deck yourself with glory. Come,
Lose no time; put away those sulky looks,
Come to your house with me, I'll teach you . . .

CHRISTIAN.

No!

CYRANO.

Why?

CHRISTIAN.

I will wait for Roxane here.

CYRANO.

How? crazy?
Come quick with me and learn . . .

CHRISTIAN.

No! no! I say.
I am aweary of these borrowed letters,
—Borrowed love-makings! Thus to act a part,
And tremble all the time!—'Twas well enough
At the beginning!—Now I know she loves!
I fear no longer—I will speak myself.

CYRANO.

Mercy!

CHRISTIAN.

And how know you I cannot speak?—
I am not such a fool when all is said!
I've by your lessons profited. You'll see
I shall know how to speak alone! The devil!
I know at least to clasp her in my arms!
[*Seeing* ROXANE *come out from* CLOMIRE'S *house.*]
—It is she! Cyrano, no!—Leave me not!

CYRANO
[*bowing*].

Speak for yourself, my friend, and take your chance
[*He disappears behind the garden wall.*]

SCENE V

CHRISTIAN, ROXANE, *the* DUENNA.

ROXANE

[*coming out of* CLOMIRE'S *house, with a company of friends, whom she leaves. Bows and good-byes*].
Barthenoide!—Alcandre!—Gremione!—

THE DUENNA

[*bitterly disappointed*].
We've missed the speech upon the Tender Passion!
[*Goes into* ROXANE'S *house.*]

ROXANE

[*still bowing*].
Urimidonte—adieu!
[*All bow to* ROXANE *and to each other, and then separate, going up different streets.* ROXANE *suddenly seeing* CHRISTIAN.].
You!
[*She goes to him.*]
Evening falls.
Let 's sit. Speak on. I listen.

CHRISTIAN

[*sits by her on the bench. A silence*].
Oh! I love you!

ROXANE

[*shutting her eyes*].
Ay, speak to me of love.

CHRISTIAN

I love thee!

ROXANE.

That's
The theme! But vary it.

CHRISTIAN.

I . . .

ROXANE.

Vary it!

CHRISTIAN.

I love you so!

ROXANE.

Oh! without doubt!—and then? . .

CHRISTIAN.

And then—I should be—oh!—so glad—so glad
If you would love me!—Roxane, tell me so!

ROXANE

[*with a little grimace*].

I hoped for cream,—you give me gruel! Say
How love possesses you?

CHRISTIAN.

Oh! utterly!

ROXANE.

Come, come! . . . unknot those tangled sentiments!

CHRISTIAN.

Your throat! I'd kiss it!

ROXANE.

Christian!

CHRISTIAN.

I love thee!

ROXANE

[*half-rising*].

Again !

CHRISTIAN

[*eagerly, detaining her*].

No no ! I love thee not !

ROXANE

[*reseating herself*].

'Tis well

CHRISTIAN.

But I adore thee !

ROXANE

[*rising, and going further off*].

Oh !

CHRISTIAN.

I am grown stupid !

ROXANE

[*drily*].

And that displeases me, almost as much
As 'twould displease me if you grew ill-favoured.

CHRISTIAN.

But . . .

ROXANE.

Rally your poor eloquence that's flown

CHRISTIAN.

I . . .

ROXANE.

Yes, you love me, that I know. Adieu.

[*She goes towards her house.*]

CHRISTIAN.

Oh, go not yet! I'd tell you——

ROXANE

[*opening the door*].

You adore me?

I've heard it very oft. No!—Go away!

CHRISTIAN.

But I would fain . . .

[*She shuts the door in his face.*]

CYRANO

[*who has re-entered unseen*].

I' faith! It is successful!

SCENE VI

CHRISTIAN, CYRANO, *two* PAGES.

CHRISTIAN.

Come to my aid!

CYRANO.

Not I!

CHRISTIAN.

But I shall die,

Unless at once I win back her fair favour.

CYRANO.

And how can I, at once, i' th' devil's name,

Lesson you in . . .

CHRISTIAN

[*seizing his arm*].

Oh, she is there!

[*The window of the balcony is now lighted up.*]

CYRANO
[*moved*].
Her window!

CHRISTIAN.
Oh! I shall die!

CYRANO.
Speak lower!

CHRISTIAN
[*in a whisper*].
I shall die!

CYRANO.
The night is dark . . .

CHRISTIAN.
Well!

CYRANO.
All can be repaired.
Although you merit not. Stand there, poor wretch!
Fronting the balcony! I'll go beneath
And prompt your words to you . . .

CHRISTIAN.
But . . .

CYRANO.
Hold your tongue!

THE PAGES
[*reappearing at back—to* CYRANO].
Ho!

CYRANO.
Hush!
[*He signs to them to speak softly.*]

FIRST PAGE

[*in a low voice*].

We 've played the serenade you bade
To Montfleury !

CYRANO

[*quickly, in a low voice*].

Go ! lurk in ambush there,
One at this street corner, and one at that ;
And if a passer-by should here intrude,
Play you a tune !

SECOND PAGE.

What tune, Sir Gassendist ?

CYRANO.

Gay, if a woman comes,—for a man, sad !
[*The* PAGES *disappear, one at each street corner. To* CHRISTIAN.]
Call her !

CHRISTIAN.

Roxane !

CYRANO

[*picking up stones and throwing them at the window*].

Some pebbles ! wait a while !

ROXANE

[*half-opening the casement*].

Who calls me ?

CHRISTIAN.

I !

ROXANE.

Who 's that ?

CHRISTIAN.

Christian!

ROXANE

[*disdainfully*].

Oh! you?

CHRISTIAN.

I would speak with you.

CYRANO

[*under the balcony—to* CHRISTIAN].

Good. Speak soft and low.

ROXANE.

No, you speak stupidly!

CHRISTIAN.

Oh, pity me!

ROXANE.

No! you love me no more!

CHRISTIAN

[*prompted by* CYRANO].

You say—Great Heaven!
I love no more?—when—I—love more and more!

ROXANE

[*who was about to shut the casement, pausing*].

Hold! 'tis a trifle better! ay, a trifle!

CHRISTIAN

[*same play*].

Love grew apace, rocked by the anxious beating . . .
Of this poor heart, which the cruel wanton boy . . .
Took for a cradle!

ROXANE

[*coming out on to the balcony*].

That is better! But
An if you deem that Cupid be so cruel
You should have stifled baby-love in 's cradle!

CHRISTIAN

[*same play*].

Ah, Madame, I assayed, but all in vain
This . . . new-born babe is a young . . . Hercules!

ROXANE.

Still better!

CHRISTIAN

[*same play*].

Thus he strangled in my heart
The . . . serpents twain, of . . . Pride . . . and Doubt!

ROXANE

[*leaning over the balcony*].

Well said!
—But why so faltering? Has mental palsy
Seized on your faculty imaginative?

CYRANO

[*drawing* CHRISTIAN *under the balcony, and slipping into his place*].

Give place! This waxes critical! . . .

ROXANE.

To-day . .
Your words are hesitating.

CYRANO

[*imitating* CHRISTIAN—*in a whisper*].

Night has come. . .
In the dusk they grope their way to find your ear.

ROXANE.

But my words find no such impediment.

CYRANO.

They find their way at once? Small wonder that!
For 'tis within my heart they find their home;
Bethink how large my heart, how small your ear!
And,—from fair heights descending, words fall fast,
But mine must mount, Madame, and that takes time!

ROXANE.

Meseems that your last words have learned to climb.

CYRANO.

With practice such gymnastic grows less hard!

ROXANE.

In truth, I seem to speak from distant heights!

CYRANO.

True, far above; at such a height 'twere death
If a hard word from you fell on my heart.

ROXANE

[*moving*].

I will come down. . . .

CYRANO

[*hastily*].

No!

ROXANE

[*showing him the bench under the balcony*].

Mount then on the bench!

CYRANO

[*starting back alarmed*].

No!

ROXANE.

How, you will not?

CYRANO

[*more and more moved*].

Stay a while! 'Tis sweet, . . .
The rare occasion, when our hearts can speak
Ourselves unseen, unseeing!

ROXANE.

Why—unseen?

CYRANO.

Ay, it is sweet! Half hidden,—half revealed—
You see the dark folds of my shrouding cloak,
And I, the glimmering whiteness of your dress:
I but a shadow—you a radiance fair!
Know you what such a moment holds for me?
If ever I were eloquent . . .

ROXANE.

You were!

CYRANO.

Yet never till to-night my speech has sprung
Straight from my heart as now it springs.

ROXANE.

Why not?

CYRANO.

Till now I spoke haphazard . . .

ROXANE.

What?

CYRANO.

Your eyes
Have beams that turn men dizzy!—But to-night
Methinks I shall find speech for the first time!

ROXANE.

'Tis true, your voice rings with a tone that's new.

CYRANO

[*coming nearer, passionately*].

Ay, a new tone! In the tender, sheltering dusk
I dare to be myself for once,—at last!

[*He stops, falters.*]

What say I? I know not!—Oh, pardon me—
It thrills me,—'tis so sweet, so novel . . .

ROXANE.

How?

So novel?

CYRANO

[*off his balance, trying to find the thread of his sentence*].

Ay,—to be at last sincere;
Till now, my chilled heart, fearing to be mocked!

ROXANE.

Mocked, and for what?

CYRANO.

For its mad beating!—Ay
My heart has clothed itself with witty words,
To shroud itself from curious eyes:—impelled
At times to aim at a star, I stay my hand,
And, fearing ridicule,—cull a wildflower!

ROXANE.

A wildflower's sweet.

CYRANO.

Ay! but to-night—the star!

ROXANE.

Oh! never have you spoken thus before!

CYRANO.

If, leaving Cupid's arrows, quivers, torches,
We turned to seek for sweeter—fresher things!
Instead of sipping in a pigmy glass
Dull fashionable waters,—did we try
How the soul slakes its thirst in fearless draught
By drinking from the river's flooding brim!

ROXANE.

But wit? . . .

CYRANO.

If I have used it to arrest you
At the first starting,—now, 'twould be an outrage,
An insult—to the perfumed Night—to Nature—
To speak fine words that garnish vain love-letters!
Look up but at her stars! The quiet Heaven
Will ease our hearts of all things artificial;
I fear lest, 'midst the alchemy we're skilled in
The truth of sentiment dissolve and vanish,—

The soul exhausted by these empty pastimes,
The gain of fine things be the loss of all things!

ROXANE.

But wit? I say . . .

CYRANO.

In love 'tis crime,—'tis hateful!
Turning frank loving into subtle fencing!
At last the moment comes, inevitable,—
—Oh, woe for those who never know that moment!
When feeling love exists in us, ennobling,
Each well-weighed word is futile and soul-saddening!

ROXANE.

Well, if that moment's come for us—suppose it!
What words would serve you?

CYRANO.

All, all, all, whatever
That came to me, e'en as they came, I'd fling them
In a wild cluster, not a careful bouquet.
I love thee! I am mad! I love, I stifle!
Thy name is in my heart as in a sheep-bell,
And as I ever tremble, thinking of thee,
Ever the bell shakes, ever thy name ringeth!
All things of thine I mind, for I love all things;
I know that last year on the twelfth of May-month,
To walk abroad, one day you changed your hair-plaits!
I am so used to take your hair for daylight
That,—like as when the eye stares on the sun's disc,
One sees long after a red blot on all things—
So, when I quit thy beams, my dazzled vision
Sees upon all things a blonde stain imprinted.

ROXANE

[*agitated*].

Why, this is love indeed! . . .

CYRANO.

Ay, true, the feeling
Which fills me, terrible and jealous, truly
Love,—which is ever sad amid its transports!
Love,—and yet, strangely, not a selfish passion!
I for your joy would gladly lay mine own down,
—E'en though you never were to know it,—never!
—If but at times I might—far off and lonely,—
Hear some gay echo of the joy I bought you!
Each glance of thine awakes in me a virtue,—
A novel, unknown valour. Dost begin, sweet,
To understand? So late, dost understand me?
Feel'st thou my soul, here, through the darkness mounting?
Too fair the night! Too fair, too fair the moment!
That I should speak thus, and that you should hearken!
Too fair! In moments when my hopes rose proudest,
I never hoped such guerdon. Nought is left me
But to die now! Have words of mine the power
To make you tremble,—throned there in the branches?
Ay, like a leaf amongst the leaves, you tremble!
You tremble! For I feel,—an if you will it,
Or will it not,—your hand's beloved trembling
Thrill through the branches, down your sprays of jasmine!

[*He kisses passionately one of the hanging tendrils.*]

ROXANE.

Ay! I am trembling, weeping!—I am thine!
Thou hast conquered all of me!

CYRANO.

Then let death come!
'Tis I, 'tis I myself, who conquered thee!
One thing, but one, I dare to ask——

CHRISTIAN
[*under the balcony*].

A kiss!

ROXANE
[*drawing back*].

What?

CYRANO.

Oh!

ROXANE.

You ask . . .?

CYRANO.

I . . .
[*To* CHRISTIAN, *whispering.*]
Fool! you go too quick!

CHRISTIAN.

Since she is moved thus—I will profit by it!

CYRANO.

[*to* ROXANE].

My words sprang thoughtlessly, but now I see—
Shame on me!—I was too presumptuous.

ROXANE.

[*a little chilled*].

How quickly you withdraw!

CYRANO.

Yes, I withdraw
Without withdrawing! Hurt I modesty?
If so—the kiss I asked—oh, grant it not.

CHRISTIAN

[*to* CYRANO, *pulling him by his cloak*].

Why?

CYRANO.

Silence, Christian! Hush!

ROXANE.

[*leaning over*].

What whisper you?

CYRANO.

I chid myself for my too bold advances;
Said, 'Silence, Christian!'

[*The lutes begin to play.*]

Hark! Wait a while, . . .
Steps come!

[ROXANE *shuts the window.* CYRANO *listens to the lutes, one of which plays a merry, the other a melancholy, tune.*]

Why, they play sad—then gay—then sad!
What? Neither man nor woman?—oh! a monk!

[*Enter a* CAPUCHIN FRIAR, *with a lantern. He goes from house to house, looking at every door.*]

SCENE VII

CYRANO, CHRISTIAN, *a* CAPUCHIN FRIAR.

CYRANO
[*to the* FRIAR].
What do you, playing at Diogenes?

THE FRIAR.
I seek the house of Madame . . .

CHRISTIAN.
Oh! plague take him!

THE FRIAR.
Madeleine Robin . . .

CHRISTIAN.
What would he? . . .

CYRANO
[*pointing to a street at the back*].
This way!
Straight on . . .

THE FRIAR.
I thank you, and, in your intention
Will tell my rosary to its last bead.
[*He goes out.*]

CYRANO.
Good luck! My blessings rest upon your cowl!
[*He goes back to* CHRISTIAN.]

SCENE VIII

CYRANO, CHRISTIAN.

CHRISTIAN.

Oh! win for me that kiss. . . .

CYRANO.

No!

CHRISTIAN.

Soon or late! . . .

CYRANO.

'Tis true! The moment of intoxication—
Of madness,—when your mouths are sure to meet,
Thanks to your fair moustache—and her rose lips!

[*To himself.*]

I'd fainer it should come, thanks to . . .

[*A sound of shutters re-opening.* CHRISTIAN *goes in again under the balcony.*]

SCENE IX

CYRANO, CHRISTIAN, ROXANE.

ROXANE

[*coming out on balcony*].

Still there?

We spoke of a . . .

CYRANO.

A kiss! The word is sweet.
I see not why your lip should shrink from it;
If the word burns it,—what would the kiss do?
Oh! let it not your bashfulness affright;
Have you not, all this time, insensibly,

Left badinage aside, and unalarmèd
Glided from smile to sigh,—from sigh to weeping?
Glide gently, imperceptibly, still onward—
From tear to kiss,—a moment's thrill!—a heart-beat!

ROXANE.

Hush! hush!

CYRANO.

A kiss, when all is said,—what is it?
An oath that's ratified,—a sealèd promise,
A heart's avowal claiming confirmation,—
A rose-dot on the 'i' of 'adoration,'—
A secret that to mouth, not ear, is whispered,—
Brush of a bee's wing, that makes time eternal,—
Communion perfumed like the spring's wildflowers,—
The heart's relieving in the heart's outbreathing,
When to the lips the soul's flood rises, brimming.

ROXANE.

Hush! hush!

CYRANO.

A kiss, Madame, is honourable:
The Queen of France, to a most favoured lord
Did grant a kiss—the Queen herself!

ROXANE.

What then?

CYRANO

[*speaking more warmly*].

Buckingham suffered dumbly,—so have I,—
Adored his Queen, as loyally as I,—
Was sad, but faithful,—so am I. . . .

ROXANE.

And you
Are fair as Buckingham!

CYRANO

[*aside—suddenly cooled*].

True,—I forgot!

ROXANE.

Must I then bid thee mount to cull this flower? . . .

CYRANO

[*pushing* CHRISTIAN *towards the balcony*].

Mount!

ROXANE.

This heart-breathing! . .

CYRANO.

Mount!

ROXANE.

This brush of bee's wing! . .

CYRANO.

Mount!

CHRISTIAN

[*hesitating*].

But I feel now, as though 'twere ill done!

ROXANE.

This moment infinite! . . .

CYRANO

[*still pushing him*].

Come, blockhead, mount!

[CHRISTIAN *springs forward, and by means of the bench, the branches, and the pillars, climbs to the balcony and strides over it.*]

CHRISTIAN.

Ah, Roxane!

[*He takes her in his arms, and bends over her lips.*]

CYRANO.

Aie! Strange pain that wings my heart!
The kiss, love's feast, so near! I, Lazarus,
Lie at the gate in darkness. Yet to me
Falls still a crumb or two from the rich man's board—
Ay, 'tis my heart receives thee, Roxane—mine!
For on the lips you press you kiss as well
The words I spoke just now!—my words—my words!

[*The lutes play.*]

A sad air,—a gay air: the monk!

[*He begins to run as if he came from a long way off, and cries out.*]

Holà!

ROXANE.

Who is it?

CYRANO.

I—I was but passing by . . .
Is Christian there?

CHRISTIAN
[*astonished*].

Cyrano!

ROXANE.

Good-day, cousin!

CYRANO.

Cousin, good-day!

ROXANE.

I'm coming!

[*She disappears into the house. At the back re-enter the* FRIAR.]

CHRISTIAN

[*seeing him*].

Back again!

[*He follows* ROXANE.]

SCENE X

CYRANO, CHRISTIAN, ROXANE, *the* FRIAR, RAGUENEAU.

THE FRIAR.

'Tis here,—I 'm sure of it—Madame Madeleine Robin.

CYRANO.

Why, you said Ro-*lin*.

THE FRIAR.

No, not I.

B, i, n, *bin*!

ROXANE

[*appearing on the threshold, followed by* RAGUENEAU *who carries a lantern, and* CHRISTIAN].

What is 't?

THE FRIAR.

A letter.

CHRISTIAN.

What?

THE FRIAR

[*to* ROXANE].

Oh, it can boot but holy business!
'Tis from a worthy lord . . .

ROXANE

[*to* CHRISTIAN].

De Guiche!

CHRISTIAN.

He dares? .

ROXANE.

Oh, he will not importune me for ever!

[*Unsealing the letter.*]

I love you,—therefore——

[*She reads in a low voice by the aid of* RAGUENEAU'S *lantern.*]

'LADY,

The drums beat;
My regiment buckles its harness on
And starts; but I,—they deem me gone before—
But I stay. I have dared to disobey
Your mandate. I am here in convent walls.
I come to you to-night. By this poor monk—
A simple fool who knows not what he bears—
I send this missive to apprise your ear.
Your lips erewhile have smiled on me, too sweet:
I go not ere I 've seen them once again!
I would be private; send each soul away,
Receive alone him,—whose great boldness you
Have deigned, I hope, to pardon, ere he asks,—
He who is ever your—*et cetera*,'

[*To the* MONK.]

Father, this is the matter of the letter :—

[*All come near her, and she reads aloud.*]

'LADY,

The Cardinal's wish is law ; albeit
It be to you unwelcome. For this cause
I send these lines—to your fair ear addressed—
By a holy man, discreet, intelligent :
It is our will that you receive from him,
In your own house, the marriage

[*She turns the page.*]

benediction
Straightway, this night. Unknown to all the world
Christian becomes your husband. Him we send.
He is abhorrent to your choice. Let be.
Resign yourself, and this obedience
Will be by Heaven well recompensed. Receive,
Fair lady, all assurance of respect,
From him who ever was, and still remains,
Your humble and obliged—*et cetera.*'

THE FRIAR

[*with great delight*].

O worthy lord ! I knew nought was to fear ;
It could be but a holy business !

ROXANE

[*to* CHRISTIAN, *in a low voice*].

Am I not apt at reading letters ?

CHRISTIAN.

Hum !

ROXANE

[*aloud, with despair*].

But this is horrible !

THE FRIAR

[*who has turned his lantern on* CYRANO].

'Tis you ?

CHRISTIAN.

'Tis I !

THE FRIAR

[*turning the light on to him, and as if a doubt struck him on seeing his beauty*].

But . . .

ROXANE

[*quickly*].

I have overlooked the postscript—see :—

'Give twenty pistoles for the Convent.'

THE FRIAR.

. . . Oh !

Most worthy lord !

[*To* ROXANE.]

Submit you !

ROXANE

[*with a martyr's look*].

I submit !

[*While* RAGUENEAU *opens the door, and* CHRISTIAN *invites the* FRIAR *to enter, she whispers to* CYRANO.]

Oh, keep De Guiche at bay ! He will be here !
Let him not enter till . . .

CYRANO.

I understand !

[*To the* FRIAR.]

What time need you to tie the marriage-knot ?

THE FRIAR.

A quarter of an hour.

CYRANO

[*pushing them all towards the house*].

Go ! I stay.

ROXANE

[*to* CHRISTIAN].

Come ! . . .

[*They enter.*]

CYRANO.

Now, how to detain De Guiche so long ?

[*He jumps on the bench, climbs to the balcony by the wall.*]

Come ! . . . up I go ! . . . I have my plan ! . . .

[*The lutes begin to play a very sad air.*]

What, ho !

[*The tremolo grows more and more weird*].

It is a man ! ay ! 'tis a man this time !

[*He is on the balcony, pulls his hat over his eyes, takes off his sword, wraps himself in his cloak, then leans over.*]

'Tis not too high !

[*He strides across the balcony, and drawing to him a long branch of one of the trees that are by the garden wall, he hangs on to it with both hands, ready to let himself fall.*]

I 'll shake this atmosphere !

SCENE XI

CYRANO, DE GUICHE.

DE GUICHE

[*who enters, masked, feeling his way in the dark*].

What can that cursèd Friar be about?

CYRANO.

The devil! . . . If he knows my voice!

[*Letting go with one hand, he pretends to turn an invisible key. Solemnly.*]

Cric! crac!

Assume thou, Cyrano, to serve the turn,
The accent of thy native Bergerac! . . .

DE GUICHE

[*looking at the house*].

'Tis there. I see dim,—this mask hinders me!

[*He is about to enter, when* CYRANO *leaps from the balcony, holding on to the branch, which bends, dropping him between the door and* DE GUICHE: *he pretends to fall heavily, as from a great height, and lies flat on the ground, motionless, as if stunned.* DE GUICHE *starts back.*]

What's this?

[*When he looks up, the branch has sprung back into its place. He sees only the sky, and is lost in amazement.*]

Where fell that man from?

CYRANO

[*sitting up, and speaking with a Gascon accent*].

From the moon!

DE GUICHE.

From . . . ?

CYRANO

[*in a dreamy voice*].

What's o'clock?

DE GUICHE.

He's lost his mind, for sure!

CYRANO.

What hour? What country this? What month? What day?

DE GUICHE.

But . . .

CYRANO.

I am stupefied!

DE GUICHE.

Sir!

CYRANO.

Like a bomb

I fell from the moon!

DE GUICHE

[*impatiently*].

Come now!

CYRANO

[*rising, in a terrible voice*].

I say,—the moon!

DE GUICHE

[*recoiling*].

Good, good! let it be so! . . . He's raving mad!

CYRANO

[*walking up to him*].

I say from the moon! I mean no metaphor! . . .

DE GUICHE.

But . . .

CYRANO.

Was't a hundred years—a minute, since?
—I cannot guess what time that fall embraced!—
That I was in that saffron-coloured ball?

DE GUICHE

[*shrugging his shoulders*].

Good! let me pass!

CYRANO

[*intercepting him*].

Where am I? Tell the truth!
Fear not to tell! Oh, spare me not! Where? where?
Have I fallen like a shooting star?

DE GUICHE.

Morbleu!

CYRANO.

The fall was lightning-quick! no time to choose
Where I should fall—I know not where it be!
Oh tell me! Is it on a moon or earth,
That my posterior weight has landed me?

DE GUICHE.

I tell you, Sir . . .

CYRANO

[*with a screech of terror, which makes* DE GUICHE *start back*].

No? Can it be? I'm on
A planet where men have black faces?

DE GUICHE

[*putting his hand to his face*].

What?

CYRANO

[*feigning great alarm*].

Am I in Africa? A native you?

DE GUICHE

[*who has remembered his mask*].

This mask of mine . . .

CYRANO

[*pretending to be reassured*].

In Venice? ha!— or Rome?

DE GUICHE

[*trying to pass*].

A lady waits . . .

CYRANO

[*quite reassured*].

Oh-ho! I am in Paris!

DE GUICHE

[*smiling in spite of himself*].

The fool is comical!

CYRANO.

You laugh!

DE GUICHE.

I laugh,

But would get by!

CYRANO

[*beaming with joy*].

I have shot back to Paris!

[*Quite at ease, laughing, dusting himself, bowing*].

Come—pardon me—by the last water-spout,
Covered with ether,—accident of travel!
My eyes still full of star-dust, and my spurs
Encumbered by the planets' filaments!

[*Picking something off his sleeve.*]

Ha! on my doublet?—ah, a comet's hair! . . .

[*He puffs as if to blow it away.*]

DE GUICHE

[*beside himself*].

Sir! . . .

CYRANO

[*just as he is about to pass, holds out his leg as if to show him something and stops him*].

In my leg—the calf—there is a tooth
Of the Great Bear,—and, passing Neptune close,
I would avoid his trident's point, and fell,

Thus sitting, plump, right in the Scales! My weight
Is marked, still registered, up there in heaven!

[*Hurriedly preventing* DE GUICHE *from passing, and detaining him by the button of his doublet.*]

I swear to you that if you squeezed my nose
It would spout milk!

DE GUICHE.

Milk?

CYRANO.

From the Milky Way!

DE GUICHE.

Oh, go to hell!

CYRANO

[*crossing his arms*].

I fall, Sir, out of heaven!
Now, would you credit it, that as I fell
I saw that Sirius wears a nightcap? True!

[*Confidentially.*]

The other Bear is still too small to bite.

[*Laughing.*]

I went through the Lyre, but I snapped a cord;

[*Grandiloquent.*]

I mean to write the whole thing in a book;
The small gold stars, that, wrapped up in my cloak
I carried safe away at no small risks
Will serve for asterisks i' the printed page!

DE GUICHE.

Come, make an end! I want . . .

CYRANO.

Oh-ho! You are sly!

DE GUICHE.

Sir!

CYRANO.

You would worm all out of me!—the way
The moon is made, and if men breathe and live
In its rotund cucurbita?

DE GUICHE
[*angrily*].

No, no!
I want . . .

CYRANO.

Ha, ha!—to know how I got up?
Hark! It was by a method all my own.

DE GUICHE
[*wearied*].

He's mad!

CYRANO
[*contemptuously*].

No! not for me the stupid eagle
Of Regiomontanus, nor the timid
Pigeon of Archytas—neither of those!

DE GUICHE.

Ay, 'tis a fool! But 'tis a learned fool!

CYRANO.

No imitator I of other men!

[DE GUICHE *has succeeded in getting by, and goes towards* ROXANE'S *door.* CYRANO *follows him, ready to stop him by force.*]

Six novel methods, all, this brain invented!

DE GUICHE
[*turning round*].

Six ?

CYRANO
[*volubly*].

First, with body naked as your hand,
Festooned about with crystal flacons, full
O' th' tears the early morning dew distils ;
My body to the sun's fierce rays exposed
To let it suck me up, as 't sucks the dew !

DE GUICHE
[*surprised, making one step towards* CYRANO].

Ah ! That makes one !

CYRANO
[*stepping back, and enticing him further away*].

And then, the second way,
To generate wind—for my impetus—
To rarefy air, in a cedar case,
By mirrors placed icosahedron-wise.

DE GUICHE
[*making another step*].

Two !

CYRANO
[*still stepping backwards*].

Or—for I have some mechanic skill—
To make a grasshopper, with springs of steel,
And launch myself by quick succeeding fires
Saltpetre-fed—to the stars' pastures blue !

DE GUICHE
[*unconsciously following him and counting on his fingers*].

Three !

CYRANO.

Or (since fumes have property to mount)-
To charge a globe with fumes, sufficiently
To carry me aloft!

DE GUICHE

[*same play, more and more astonished*].

Well, that makes four!

CYRANO.

Or smear myself with marrow from a bull,
Since, at the lowest point of Zodiac,
Phœbus well loves to suck that marrow up!

DE GUICHE

[*amazed*].

Five!

CYRANO.

[*who, while speaking, had drawn him to the other side of the square near a bench*].

Sitting on an iron platform—thence
To throw a magnet in the air. This is
A method well conceived—the magnet flown
Infallibly the iron will pursue:
Then quick! relaunch your magnet, and you thus
Can mount and mount unmeasured distances!

DE GUICHE.

Here are six excellent expedients!
Which of the six chose you?

CYRANO.

Why, none!—a seventh!

DE GUICHE.

Astonishing! What was it?

CYRANO.

I'll recount.

DE GUICHE.

This wild eccentric becomes interesting!

CYRANO

[*making a noise like the waves, with weird gestures*].

Houüh! houüh!

DE GUICHE.

Well.

CYRANO.

You have guessed?

DE GUICHE.

Not I!

CYRANO.

The tide!
I' th' witching hour when the moon woos the wave,
I laid me, fresh from a sea-bath, on the shore—
And, failing not to put head foremost—for
The hair holds the sea-water in its mesh—
I rose in air, straight! straight!—like angel's flight,
And mounted, mounted, gently, effortless, . . .
When lo! a sudden shock! Then . . .

DE GUICHE

[*overcome by curiosity, sitting down on the bench*].

Then?

CYRANO.

Oh! then . . .

[*Suddenly returning to his natural voice*].

The quarter's gone—I'll hinder you no more:
The marriage-vows are made.

DE GUICHE

[*springing up*].

What! Am I mad?
That voice?

[*The house-door opens. Lackeys appear carrying lighted candelabra. Light.* CYRANO *gracefully uncovers.*]

That nose—Cyrano?

CYRANO

[*bowing*].

Cyrano.
While we were chatting, they have plighted troth.

DE GUICHE.

Who?

[*He turns round. Tableau. Behind the lackeys appear* ROXANE *and* CHRISTIAN, *holding each other by the hand. The* FRIAR *follows them, smiling.* RAGUENEAU *also holds a candlestick. The* DUENNA *closes the rear, bewildered, having made a hasty toilet.*]

Heavens!

SCENE XII

The SAME. ROXANE, CHRISTIAN, *the* FRIAR, RAGUENEAU, LACKEYS, *the* DUENNA.

DE GUICHE
[*to* ROXANE].

You?

[*Recognising* CHRISTIAN, *in amazement.*]

He?

[*Bowing, with admiration to* ROXANE.]

Cunningly contrived!

[*To* CYRANO.]

My compliments—Sir Apparatus-maker!
Your story would arrest at Peter's gate
Saints eager for their Paradise! Note well
The details. 'Faith! They'd make a stirring book!

CYRANO
[*bowing*].

I shall not fail to follow your advice.

THE FRIAR
[*showing with satisfaction the two lovers to* DE GUICHE].

A handsome couple, son, made one by you!

DE GUICHE
[*with a freezing look*].

Ay!

[*To* ROXANE.]

Bid your bridegroom, Madame, fond farewell.

ROXANE.

Why so!

DE GUICHE

[*to* CHRISTIAN].

Even now the regiment departs.

Join it!

ROXANE.

It goes to battle?

DE GUICHE.

Without doubt.

ROXANE.

But the Cadets go not?

DE GUICHE.

Oh ay! they go.

[*Drawing out the paper he had put in his pocket.*]

Here is the order.

[*To* CHRISTIAN.]

Baron, bear it, quick!

ROXANE

[*throwing herself in* CHRISTIAN'S *arms*].

Christian!

DE GUICHE

[*sneeringly to* CYRANO].

The wedding-night is far, methinks!

CYRANO

[*aside*].

He thinks to give me pain of death by this!

CHRISTIAN

[*to* ROXANE].

Oh! once again! Your lips!

CYRANO.

Come, come, enough!

CHRISTIAN

[*still kissing* ROXANE].

'Tis hard to leave her,—you know not . . .

CYRANO

[*trying to draw him away*].

I know.

[*Sound of drums beating a march in the distance.*]

DE GUICHE.

The regiment starts!

ROXANE

[*to* CYRANO, *holding back* CHRISTIAN, *whom* CYRANO *is drawing away*].

Oh!—I trust him you!
Promise me that no risks shall put his life
In danger!

CYRANO.

I will try my best, but promise . . .
That I cannot!

ROXANE.

But swear he shall be prudent!

CYRANO.

Again, I ll do my best, but . . .

ROXANE.

In the siege
Let him not suffer!

CYRANO.

All that man can do,
I . . .

ROXANE.

That he shall be faithful!

CYRANO.

Doubtless, but . . .

ROXANE.

That he will write oft?

CYRANO
[*pausing*].

That,—I promise you!

CURTAIN.

ACT IV

The Cadets of Gascony.

Post occupied by company of Carbon de Castel-Jaloux *at the siege of Arras.*

In the background an embankment across the whole stage. Beyond, view of plain extending to the horizon. The country covered with entrenchments. The walls of Arras and the outlines of its roofs against the sky in the distance. Tents. Arms strewn about, drums, etc. Day is breaking with a faint glimmer of yellow sunrise in the east. Sentinels at different points. Watch-fires. The Cadets of Gascony, *wrapped in their mantles, are sleeping.* Carbon de Castel-Jaloux *and* Le Bret *are keeping watch. They are very pale and thin.* Christian *sleeps among the others in his cloak in the foreground, his face illuminated by the fire. Silence.*

SCENE I

Christian, Carbon de Castel-Jaloux, Le Bret, *the* Cadets, *then* Cyrano.

Le Bret.

'Tis terrible.

Carbon.

Not a morsel left,

LE BRET.

Mordious!

CARBON

[*making a sign that he should speak lower*].

Curse under your breath. You will awake them.

[*To the* CADETS.]

Hush! Sleep on.

[*To* LE BRET.]

He who sleeps, dines!

LE BRET.

But that is sorry comfort for the sleepless! . . .
What starvation!

[*Firing is heard in the distance.*]

CARBON.

Oh, plague take their firing! 'Twill wake my sons.

[*To the* CADETS, *who lift up their heads.*]

Sleep on!

[*Firing is again heard, nearer this time.*]

A CADET

[*moving*].

The devil! . . . Again.

CARBON.

'Tis nothing! 'Tis Cyrano coming back!

[*Those who have lifted up their heads prepare to sleep again.*]

A SENTINEL

[*from without*].

Ventrebieu! Who goes there?

THE VOICE OF CYRANO.

Bergerac.

THE SENTINEL

[*who is on the redoubt*].

Ventrebieu!
Who goes there?

CYRANO

[*appearing at the top*].

Bergerac, idiot!

[*He comes down,* LE BRET *advances anxiously to meet him.*]

LE BRET.

Heavens!

CYRANO

[*making signs that he should not awake the others*].

Hush!

LE BRET.

Wounded?

CYRANO.

Oh! you know it has become their custom to shoot at me every morning and to miss me.

LE BRET.

This passes all! To take letters at each day's dawn. To risk . . .

CYRANO

[*stopping before* CHRISTIAN].

I promised he should write often.

[*He looks at him.*]

He sleeps. How pale he is! But how handsome still, despite his sufferings. If his poor little lady-love knew that he is dying of hunger . . .

LE BRET.

Get you quick to bed.

CYRANO.

Nay, never scold, Le Bret. I ran but little risk. I have found me a spot to pass the Spanish lines, where each night they lie drunk.

LE BRET.

ou should try to bring us back provision.

CYRANO.

A man must carry no weight who would get by there! But there will be surprise for us this night. The French will eat or die . . . if I mistake not!

LE BRET.

Oh! . . . tell me! . . .

CYRANO.

Nay, not yet. I am not certain . . You will see!

CARBON.

It is disgraceful that we should starve while we're besieging!

LE BRET.

Alas, how full of complication is this siege of

Arras! To think that while we are besieging, we should ourselves be caught in a trap and besieged by the Cardinal Infante of Spain.

CYRANO.

It were well done if he should be besieged in his turn.

LE BRET.

I am in earnest.

CYRANO.

Oh! indeed!

LE BRET.

To think you risk a life so precious . . . for the sake of a letter . . . Thankless one.

[*Seeing him turning to enter the tent.*]

Where are you going?

CYRANO

I am going to write another.

[*He enters the tent and disappears.*]

SCENE II

The SAME, *all but* CYRANO. *The day is breaking in a rosy light. The town of Arras is golden in the horizon. The report of cannon is heard in the distance, followed immediately by the beating of drums far away to the left. Other drums are heard much nearer. Sounds of stirring in the camp. Voices of officers in the distance.*

CARBON

[*sighing*].

The *reveille!*

[*The* CADETS *move and stretch themselves.*]

Nourishing sleep! thou art at an end! . . . I know well what will be their first cry!

A CADET

[*sitting up*].

I am so hungry!

ANOTHER.

I am dying of hunger.

TOGETHER.

Oh!

CARBON.

Up with you!

THIRD CADET.

—Cannot move a limb.

FOURTH CADET.

Nor can I.

THE FIRST

[*looking at himself in a bit of armour*].

My tongue is yellow. The air at this season of the year is hard to digest.

ANOTHER.

My coronet for a bit of Chester!

ANOTHER.

If none can furnish to my gaster wherewith to make a pint of chyle, I shall retire to my tent—like Achilles!

ANOTHER.

Oh! something! were it but a crust!

CARBON

going to the tent and calling softly].

Cyrano!

ALL THE CADETS.

We are dying!

CARBON

[*continuing to speak under his breath at the opening of the tent*].

Come to my aid, you, who have the art of quick retort and gay jest. Come, hearten them up.

SECOND CADET

[*rushing towards another who is munching something*].

What are you crunching there?

FIRST CADET.

Cannon-wads, soaked in axle-grease! 'Tis poor hunting round about Arras!

A CADET

[*entering*].

I have been after game.

ANOTHER

[*following him*].

And I after fish.

ALL

[*rushing to the two new-comers*].

Well! what have you brought?—a pheasant?—a carp?—Come, show us quick!

THE ANGLER.

A gudgeon!

THE SPORTSMAN.

A sparrow!

ALL TOGETHER

[*beside themselves*].

'Tis more than can be borne? We will mutiny!

CARBON.

Cyrano! come to my help.

[*The daylight has now come.*]

SCENE III

The SAME. CYRANO.

CYRANO

[*appearing from the tent, very calm, with a pen stuck behind his ear and a book in his hand*].

What is wrong?

[*Silence.*]

[*To the* FIRST CADET.]

Why drag you your legs so sorrowfully?

THE CADET.

I have something in my heels which weighs them down.

CYRANO.

And what may that be?

THE CADET.

My stomach!

CYRANO.

So have I, 'faith!

THE CADET.

It must be in your way?

CYRANO.

Nay, I am all the taller.

A THIRD.

My stomach's hollow.

CYRANO.

'Faith 'twill make a fine drum to sound the assault.

ANOTHER.

I have a ringing in my ears.

CYRANO.

No, no, 'tis false; a hungry stomach has no ears.

ANOTHER.

Oh to eat something—something oily!

CYRANO

[*pulling off the* CADET'S *helmet and holding it out to him*].

Behold your salad!

ANOTHER.

What, in God's name, can we devour?

CYRANO

[*throwing him the book which he is carrying*].
The *Iliad*.

ANOTHER.

The first minister in Paris has his four meals a day!

CYRANO.

'Twere courteous an he sent you a few partridges!

THE SAME.

And why not? with wine too!

CYRANO.

A little Burgundy, Richelieu, *s'il vous plait!*

THE SAME.

He could send it by one of his friars.

CYRANO.

Ay! by His Eminence Joseph himself.

ANOTHER.

I am as ravenous as an ogre!

CYRANO.

Eat your patience, then.

THE FIRST CADET

[*shrugging his shoulders*]

Always your pointed word!

CYRANO.

Ay, pointed words!
I would fain die thus, some soft summer eve,
Making a pointed word for a good cause.
—To make a soldier's end by soldier's sword,

Wielded by some brave adversary—die
On blood-stained turf, not on a fever-bed,
A point upon my lips, a point within my heart.

CRIES FROM ALL.

I'm hungry!

CYRANO

[*crossing his arms*].

All your thoughts of meat and drink!
Bertrand the fifer!—you were shepherd once,—
Draw from its double leathern case your fife,
Play to these greedy, guzzling soldiers. Play
Old country airs with plaintive rhythm recurring,
Where lurk sweet echoes of the dear home-voices,
Each note of which calls like a little sister,
Those airs slow, slow ascending, as the smoke-wreaths
Rise from the hearthstones of our native hamlets,
Their music strikes the ear like Gascon *patois*! . . .

[*The old man seats himself, and gets his flute ready.*]

Your flute was now a warrior in durance;
But on its stem your fingers are a-dancing
A bird-like minuet! O flute! Remember
That flutes were made of reeds first, not laburnum;
Make us a music pastoral days recalling—
The soul-time of your youth, in country pastures! . .

[*The old man begins to play the airs of Languedoc.*]

Hark to the music, Gascons! . . . 'Tis no longer
The piercing fife of camp—but 'neath his fingers
The flute of the woods! No more the call to combat,

'Tis now the love-song of the wandering goat-herds! . . .
Hark! . . . 'tis the valley, the wet *landes*, the forest,
The sunburnt shepherd-boy with scarlet *béret*,
The dusk of evening on the Dordogne river,—
Tis Gascony! Hark, Gascons, to the music!

[*The* CADETS *sit with bowed heads; their eyes have a far-off look as if dreaming, and they surreptitiously wipe away their tears with their cuffs and the corner of their cloaks.*]

CARBON

[*to* CYRANO *in a whisper*].

But you make them weep!

CYRANO.

Ay, for home-sickness. A nobler pain than hunger,—'tis of the soul, not of the body! I am well pleased to see their pain change its *viscera*. Heart-ache is better than stomach-ache.

CARBON.

But you weaken their courage by playing thus on their heart-strings!

CYRANO

[*making a sign to a drummer to approach*].

Not I. The hero that sleeps in Gascon blood is ever ready to awake in them. 'Twould suffice . . .

[*He makes a signal; the drum beats.*]

ALL THE CADETS

[*stand up and rush to take arms*].

What? What is it?

CYRANO

[*smiling*].

You see! One roll of the drum is enough! Good-bye dreams, regrets, native land, love. . . . All that the pipe called forth the drum has chased away!

A CADET

[*looking towards the back of the stage*]

Ho, here comes Monsieur de Guiche.

ALL THE CADETS

[*muttering*].

Ugh! . . . Ugh! . . .

CYRANO

[*smiling*].

A flattering welcome!

A CADET.

We are sick to death of him!

ANOTHER CADET.

—With his lace collar over his armour, playing the fine gentleman!

ANOTHER.

As if one wore linen over steel!

THE FIRST.

It were good for a bandage had he boils on his neck.

THE SECOND.

Another plotting courtier!

ANOTHER CADET.

His uncle's own nephew!

CARBON.

For all that—a Gascon.

THE FIRST.

Ay, false Gascon! . . . trust him not . . . Gascons should ever be crack-brained. . . . Nought more dangerous than a rational Gascon.

LE BRET.

How pale he is!

ANOTHER.

Oh! he is hungry, just like us poor devils; but under his cuirass, with its fine gilt nails, his stomach-ache glitters brave in the sun.

CYRANO

[*hurriedly*].

Let us not seem to suffer either! Out with your cards, pipes, and dice. . . .

[*All begin spreading out the games on the drums, the stools, the ground, and on their cloaks, and light long pipes.*]

And I shall read Descartes.

[*He walks up and down, reading a little book which he has drawn from his pocket. Tableau. Enter* DE GUICHE. *All appear absorbed and happy. He is very pale. He goes up to* CARBON.]

SCENE IV

The SAME DE GUICHE.

DE GUICHE
[*to* CARBON].

Good-day!

[*They examine each other. Aside, with satisfaction.*]

He's green.

CARBON
[*aside*].

He has nothing left but eyes.

DE GUICHE
[*looking at the* CADETS].

Here are the rebels! Ay, Sirs, on all sides
I hear that in your ranks you scoff at me;
That the Cadets, these loutish, mountain-bred,
Poor country squires, and barons of Périgord,
Scarce find for me—their Colonel—a disdain
Sufficient! call me plotter, wily courtier!
It does not please their mightiness to see
A point-lace collar on my steel cuirass,—
And they enrage, because a man, in sooth,
May be no ragged-robin, yet a Gascon!

[*Silence. All smoke and play.*]

Shall I command your Captain punish you?
No.

CARBON.

I am free, moreover,—will not punish——

DE GUICHE.

Ah!

CARBON.

I have paid my company—'tis mine.
I bow but to headquarters.

DE GUICHE.

So?—In faith!
That will suffice.

[*Addressing himself to the* CADETS.]

I can despise your taunts;
'Tis well known how I bear me in the war;
At Bapaume, yesterday, they saw the rage
With which I beat back the Count of Bucquoi;
Assembling my own men, I fell on his,
And charged three separate times!

CYRANO

[*without lifting his eyes from his book*].

And your white scarf?

DE GUICHE

[*surprised and gratified*].

You know that detail? . . . Troth! it happened thus:
While caracoling to recall the troops
For the third charge, a band of fugitives
Bore me with them, close by the hostile ranks:
I was in peril—capture, sudden death!—
When I thought of the good expedient
To loosen and let fall the scarf which told
My military rank; thus I contrived
—Without attention waked—to leave the foes,
And suddenly returning, reinforced
With my own men, to scatter them! And now,
—What say you, Sir?

[*The* CADETS *pretend not to be listening, but the*

cards and the dice-boxes remain suspended in their hands, the smoke of their pipes in their cheeks. They wait.]

CYRANO.

I say, that Henri Quatre
Had not, by any dangerous odds, been forced
To strip himself of his white helmet plume.

[*Silent delight. The cards fall, the dice rattle. The smoke is puffed.*]

DE GUICHE.

The ruse succeeded, though!

[*Same suspension of play, etc.*]

CYRANO.

Oh, may be! But
One does not lightly abdicate the honour
To serve as target to the enemy.

[*Cards, dice, fall again, and the* CADETS *smoke with evident delight.*]

Had I been present when your scarf fell low,
—Our courage, Sir, is of a different sort—
I would have picked it up and put it on.

DE GUICHE.

Oh, ay! Another Gascon boast!

CYRANO.

A boast?
Lend it to me. I pledge myself, to-night,
—With it across my breast,—to lead th' assault.

DE GUICHE.

Another Gascon vaunt! You know the scarf
Lies with the enemy, upon the brink
Of the stream, ... the place is riddled now with shot,—
No one can fetch it hither!

CYRANO

[*drawing the scarf from his pocket, and holding it out to him*].

Here it is.

[*Silence. The* CADETS *stifle their laughter in their cards and dice-boxes.* DE GUICHE *turns and looks at them; they instantly become grave, and set to play. One of them whistles indifferently the air just played by the fifer.*]

DE GUICHE

[*taking the scarf*].

I thank you. It will now enable me
To make a signal,—that I had forborne
To make—till now.

[*He goes to the rampart, climbs it, and waves the scarf thrice.*]

ALL.

What's that?

THE SENTINEL

[*from the top of the rampart*].

See you yon man
Down there, who runs? . . .

DE GUICHE
[*descending*].

'Tis a false Spanish spy
Who is extremely useful to my ends.
The news he carries to the enemy
Are those I prompt him with—so, in a word,
We have an influence on their decisions!

CYRANO.

Scoundrel!

DE GUICHE
[*carelessly knotting on his scarf*].

'Tis opportune. What were we saying?
Ah! I have news for you. Last evening
—To victual us—the Marshal did attempt
A final effort:—secretly he went
To Dourlens, where the King's provisions be.
But—to return to camp more easily—
He took with him a goodly force of troops.
Those who attacked us now would have fine sport!
Half of the army 's absent from the camp!

CARBON.

Ay, if the Spaniards knew, 'twere ill for us,
But they know nothing of it?

DE GUICHE.

Oh! they know.
They will attack us.

CARBON.

Ah!

DE GUICHE.

For my false spy
Came to warn me of their attack. He said,
'I can decide the point for their assault;
Where would you have it? I will tell them 'tis
The least defended—they 'll attempt you there.'
I answered, 'Good. Go out of camp, but watch
My signal. Choose the point from whence it comes.

CARBON

[*to* CADETS].

Make ready!

[*All rise; sounds of swords and belts being buckled.*]

DE GUICHE.

'Twill be in an hour.

FIRST CADET.

Good! . . .

[*They all sit down again and take up their games.*]

DE GUICHE

[*to* CARBON].

Time must be gained. The Marshal will return.

CARBON.

How gain it?

DE GUICHE.

You will all be good enough
To let yourselves be killed.

CYRANO.

Vengeance! oho!

DE GUICHE.

I do not say that, if I loved you well,
I had chosen you and yours,—but, as things stand,
—Your courage yielding to no corps the palm—
I serve my King, and serve my grudge as well.

CYRANO.

Permit that I express my gratitude . . .

DE GUICHE.

I know you love to fight against fivescore ;
You will not now complain of paltry odds.

[*He goes up with* CARBON.]

CYRANO

[*to* CADETS].

We shall add to the Gascon coat of arms,
With its six bars of blue and gold, one more—
The blood-red bar that was a-missing there !

[DE GUICHE *speaks in a low voice with* CARBON *at the back. Orders are given. Preparations go forward.* CYRANO *goes up to* CHRISTIAN, *who stands with crossed arms.*]

CYRANO

[*putting his hand on* CHRISTIAN'S *shoulder*].

Christian !

CHRISTIAN

[*shaking his head*].

Roxane !

CYRANO.

Alas !

CHRISTIAN.

At least, I'd send
My heart's farewell to her in a fair letter! . . .

CYRANO.

I had suspicion it would be to-day,
[*He draws a letter out of his doublet.*]
And had already writ . . .

CHRISTIAN.

Show!

CYRANO.

Will you . . .?

CHRISTIAN.

[*taking the letter*].

Ay!

[*He opens and reads it.*]

Hold!

CYRANO.

What?

CHRISTIAN.

This little spot!

CYRANO

[*taking the letter, with an innocent look*].

A spot?

CHRISTIAN.

A tear!

CYRANO.

Poets, at last,—by dint of counterfeiting—
Take counterfeit for true—that is the charm!
This farewell letter,—it was passing sad,
I wept myself in writing it!

CHRISTIAN.

Wept? why?

CYRANO.

Oh! . . . death itself is hardly terrible, . . .
—But, ne'er to see her more! That is death's sting!
—For . . . I shall never . . .

[CHRISTIAN *looks at him.*]

We shall . . .

[*Quickly.*]

I mean, you . .

CHRISTIAN

[*snatching the letter from him*].

Give me that letter!

[*A rumour, far off in the camp.*]

VOICE OF SENTINEL.

Who goes there? Hallo!

[*Shots—voices—carriage-bells.*]

CARBON.

What is it!

A SENTINEL

[*on the rampart*].

'Tis a carriage!

[*All rush to see.*]

CRIES.

In the camp?

It enters!—It comes from the enemy!
—Fire!—No!—The coachman cries!—What does he say?
—'On the King's service!'

[*Every one is on the rampart, staring. The bells come nearer.*]

DE GUICHE.

The King's service? How?

[*All descend and draw up in line.*]

CARBON.

Uncover, all!

DE GUICHE.

The King's! Draw up in line!
Let him describe his curve as it befits!

[*The carriage enters at full speed covered with dust and mud. The curtains are drawn close. Two lackeys behind. It is pulled up suddenly.*]

CARBON.

Beat a salute!

[*A roll of drums. The* CADETS *uncover.*]

DE GUICHE.

Lower the carriage-steps!

[*Two* CADETS *rush forward. The door opens.*]

ROXANE

[*Jumping down from the carriage*].

Good-day!

[*All are bowing to the ground, but at the sound of a woman's voice every head is instantly raised.*]

SCENE V

The SAME. ROXANE.

DE GUICHE.

On the King's service! You?

ROXANE.

Ay,—King Love's! What other king?

CYRANO

Great God!

CHRISTIAN

[*rushing forward*].

Why have you come?

ROXANE.

This siege—'tis too long!

CHRISTIAN.

But why? . . .

ROXANE.

I will tell you all!

CYRANO

[*who, at the sound of her voice, has stood still, rooted to the ground, afraid to raise his eyes*].

My God! dare I look at her?

DE GUICHE.

You cannot remain here!

ROXANE

[*merrily*].

But I say yes! Who will push a drum hither for me? [*She seats herself on the drum they roll forward.*] So! I thank you. [*She laughs.*] My carriage was fired at [*proudly*] by the patrol! Look! would you not think 'twas made of a pumpkin, like Cinderella's

chariot in the tale,—and the footmen out of rats [*Sending a kiss with her lips to* CHRISTIAN.] Good-morrow! [*Examining them all.*] You look not merry, any of you! Ah! know you that 'tis a long road to get to Arras? [*Seeing* CYRANO.] Cousin, delighted!

CYRANO

[*coming up to her*].

But how, in Heaven's name? . . .

ROXANE.

How found I the way to the army? It was simple enough, for I had but to pass on and on, as far as I saw the country laid waste. Ah! what horrors were there! Had I not seen, then I could never have believed it! Well, gentlemen, if such be the service of your King, I would fainer serve mine!

CYRANO.

But 'tis sheer madness! Where in the fiend's name did you get through?

ROXANE.

Where? Through the Spanish lines.

FIRST CADET.

—For subtle craft, give me a woman!

DE GUICHE.

But how did you pass through their lines?

LE BRET.

Faith! that must have been a hard matter! . . .

ROXANE.

None too hard. I but drove quietly forward in my carriage, and when some hidalgo of haughty mien would have stayed me, lo! I showed at the window my sweetest smile, and these Señors being (with no disrespect to you) the most gallant gentlemen in the world,—I passed on!

CARBON.

True, that smile is a passport! But you must have been asked frequently to give an account of where you were going, Madame?

ROXANE.

Yes, frequently. Then I would answer, 'I go to see my lover.' At that word the very fiercest Spaniard of them all would gravely shut the carriage-door, and, with a gesture that a king might envy, make signal to his men to lower the muskets levelled at me;—then, with melancholy but withal very graceful dignity—his beaver held to the wind that the plumes might flutter bravely, he would bow low, saying to me, 'Pass on, Señorita!'

CHRISTIAN.

But, Roxane . . .

ROXANE.

Forgive me that I said, 'my lover'! But bethink you, had I said 'my husband' not one of them had let me pass!

CHRISTIAN.

But . . .

ROXANE.

What ails you?

DE GUICHE.

You must leave this place!

ROXANE.

I?

CYRANO.

And that instantly!

LE BRET.

No time to lose.

CHRISTIAN.

Indeed, you must.

ROXANE.

But wherefore must I?

CHRISTIAN
[*embarrassed*].

'Tis that . . .

CYRANO
[*the same*].

—In three quarters of an hour . .

DE GUICHE
[*the same*].

—Or four . . .

CARBON
[*the same*].

It were best . . .

LE BRET

[*the same*].

You might . . .

ROXANE.

You are going to fight?—I stay here.

ALL.

No, no!

ROXANE.

He is my husband! [*She throws herself into* CHRISTIAN'S *arms.*] They shall kill us both together!

CHRISTIAN.

Why do you look at me thus?

ROXANE.

I will tell you why!

DE GUICHE

[*in despair*].

'Tis a post of mortal danger!

ROXANE

[*turning round*].

Mortal danger?

CYRANO.

Proof enough, that he has put us here!

ROXANE

[*to* DE GUICHE].

So, Sir, you would have made a widow of me?

DE GUICHE.

Nay, on my oath . .

ROXANE.

I will not go! I am reckless now, and I shall not stir from here!—Besides, 'tis amusing!

CYRANO.

Oh-ho! So our *précieuse* is a heroine!

ROXANE.

Monsieur de Bergerac, I am your cousin.

A CADET.

We will defend you well!

ROXANE

[*more and more excited*].

I have no fear of that, my friends!

ANOTHER

[*in ecstasy*].

The whole camp smells sweet of orris-root!

ROXANE.

And, by good luck, I have chosen a hat that will suit well with the battle-field!

[*Looking at* DE GUICHE.]

But were it not wisest that the Count retire? They may begin the attack.

DE GUICHE.

That is not to be brooked! I go to inspect the cannon, and shall return. You have still time—think better of it!

ROXANE.

Never!

[DE GUICHE *goes out.*]

SCENE VI

The SAME, *all but* DE GUICHE

CHRISTIAN

[*entreatingly*].

Roxane!

ROXANE.

No!

FIRST CADET

[*to the others*].

She stays!

ALL

[*hurrying, hustling each other, tidying themselves*].

A comb!—Soap!—My uniform is torn!—A needle!—A ribbon!—Lend your mirror!—My cuffs!—Your curling-iron!—A razor! . . .

ROXANE

[*to* CYRANO, *who still pleads with her*].

No! Nought shall make me stir from this spot!

CARBON

[*who, like the others, has been buckling, dusting, brushing his hat, settling the plume, and drawing on his cuffs, advances to* ROXANE, *and ceremoniously*].

It is perchance more seemly, since things are thus, that I present to you some of these gentlemen

who are about to have the honour of dying before your eyes.

[ROXANE *bows, and stands leaning on* CHRISTIAN'S *arm, while* CARBON *introduces the* CADETS *to her.*]

Baron de Peyrescous de Colignac !

THE CADET

[*with a low reverence*].

Madame . . .

CARBON

[*continuing*].

Baron de Casterac de Cahuzac,—Vidame de Malgouyre Estressac Lésbas d'Escarabiot, Chevalier d'Antignac—Juzet, Baron Hillot de Blagnac—Saléchan de Castel Crabioules . . .

ROXANE.

But how many names have you each ?

BARON HILLOT.

Scores !

CARBON

[*to* ROXANE].

Pray, open the hand that holds your kerchief.

ROXANE

[*opens her hand, and the handkerchief falls*].

Why ?

[*The whole company start forward to pick it up.*]

CARBON

[*quickly raising it*].

My company had no flag. But now, by my faith, they will have the fairest in all the camp!

ROXANE

[*smiling*].

'Tis somewhat small.

CARBON

[*tying the handkerchief on the staff of his lance*].

But—'tis of lace!

A CADET

[*to the rest*].

I could die happy, having seen so sweet a face, if I had something in my stomach—were it but a nut!

CARBON

[*who has overheard, indignantly*].

Shame on you! What, talk of eating when a lovely woman . . .!

ROXANE.

But your camp air is keen; I myself am famished; Pasties, cold *fricassée*, old wines—there is my bill of fare! Pray bring it all here.

[*Consternation.*]

A CADET.

All that?

ANOTHER.

But where on earth find it?

ROXANE

[*quietly*].

In my carriage.

ALL.

How?

ROXANE.

Now serve up—carve! Look a little closer at my coachman, gentlemen, and you will recognise a man most welcome. All the sauces can be sent to table hot, if we will!

THE CADETS

[*rushing pell-mell to the carriage*].

'Tis Ragueneau! [*Acclamations.*] Oh, oh!

ROXANE

[*looking after them*].

Poor fellows!

CYRANO

[*kissing her hand*].

Kind fairy!

RAGUENEAU

[*standing on the box like a quack doctor at a fair*].

Gentlemen! . . .

[*General delight.*]

THE CADETS.

Bravo! bravo!

RAGUENEAU.

. . . The Spaniards, gazing on a lady so dainty fair, overlooked the fare so dainty! . . .

[*Applause.*]

CYRANO

[*in a whisper to* CHRISTIAN].

Hark, Christian!

RAGUENEAU.

. . . And, occupied with gallantry, perceived not—[*He draws a plate from under the seat, and holds it up*]—the galantine! . . .

[*Applause. The galantine passes from hand to hand.*]

CYRANO

[*still whispering to* CHRISTIAN].

Prythee, one word!

RAGUENEAU.

And Venus so attracted their eyes that Diana could secretly pass by with—[*He holds up a shoulder of mutton*]—her fawn!

[*Enthusiasm. Twenty hands are held out to seize the shoulder of mutton.*]

CYRANO

[*in a lower whisper to* CHRISTIAN].

I must speak to you!

ROXANE

[*to the* CADETS, *who come down, their arms laden with food*].

Put it all on the ground!

[*She lays all out on the grass, aided by the two imperturbable lackeys who were behind the carriage.*]

ROXANE

[*to* CHRISTIAN, *just as* CYRANO *is drawing him apart*].

Come, make yourself of use!

[CHRISTIAN *comes to help her.* CYRANO'S *uneasiness increases.*]

RAGUENEAU.

Truffled peacock!

FIRST CADET

[*radiant, coming down, cutting a big slice of ham*].

By the mass! We shall not brave the last hazard without having had a gullet-full!—[*quickly correcting himself on seeing* ROXANE]—Pardon!—a Balthazar-feast!

RAGUENEAU

[*throwing down the carriage cushions*].

The cushions are stuffed with ortolans!

[*Hubbub. They tear open and turn out the contents of the cushions. Bursts of laughter—merriment.*]

RAGUENEAU

[*throwing down to the* CADETS *bottles of red wine*].

Flasks of rubies!—[*and white wine*]—Flasks of topaz!

ROXANE

[*throwing a folded tablecloth at* CYRANO'S *head*].

Unfold me that napkin! — Come, come! be nimble!

RAGUENEAU

[*waving a lantern*].

Each of the carriage-lamps is a little larder!

CYRANO

[*in a low voice to* CHRISTIAN, *as they arrange the cloth together*].

I must speak with you ere you speak to her.

RAGUENEAU.

My whip-handle is an Arles sausage!

ROXANE

[*pouring out wine, helping*]

Since we are to die, let the rest of the army shift for itself. All for the Gascons! And mark! if De Guiche comes, let no one invite him!

[*Going from one to the other.*]

There! there! You have time enough! Do not eat too fast!—Drink a little.—Why are you crying?

FIRST CADET.

It is all so good! . .

ROXANE.

Tut!—Red or white?—Some bread for Monsieur de Carbon!—a knife! Pass your plate!—a little of the crust? Some more? Let me help you!—Some champagne?—A wing?

CYRANO

[*who follows her, his arms laden with dishes, helping her to wait on everybody*].

How I worship her!

ROXANE

[*going up to* CHRISTIAN].

What will you?

CHRISTIAN.

Nothing.

ROXANE.

Nay, nay, take this biscuit, steeped in muscat; come! . . . but two drops!

CHRISTIAN

[*trying to detain her*].

Oh! tell me why you came?

ROXANE.

Wait, my first duty is to these poor fellows.—Hush! In a few minutes . . .

LE BRET

[*who had gone up to pass a loaf on the end of a lance to the sentry on the rampart*].

De Guiche!

CYRANO.

Quick! hide flasks, plates, pie-dishes, game-baskets! Hurry!—Let us all look unconscious!

[*To* RAGUENEAU.]

Up on your seat!—Is everything covered up?

[*In an instant all has been pushed into the tents, or hidden under doublets, cloaks, and beavers.* DE GUICHE *enters hurriedly,—stops suddenly, sniffing the air. Silence.*]

SCENE VII

The SAME. DE GUICHE.

DE GUICHE.

It smells good here.

A CADET

[*humming*].

Lo! lo-lo!

DE GUICHE

[*looking at him*].

What is the matter?—You are very red!

THE CADET.

The matter?—Nothing!—'Tis my blood—boiling at the thought of the coming battle!

ANOTHER.

Poum, poum—poum . . .

DE GUICHE

[*turning round*].

What's that?

THE CADET
[*slightly drunk*].

Nothing! . . . 'Tis a song!—a little . .

DE GUICHE.

You are merry, my friend!

THE CADET.

The approach of danger is intoxicating!

DE GUICHE
[*calling* CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX, *to give him an order*].

Captain! I . . .

[*He stops short on seeing him.*]

Plague take me! but you look bravely, too!

CARBON
[*crimson in the face, hiding a bottle behind his back, with an evasive movement*].

Oh! . . .

DE GUICHE.

I have one cannon left, and have had it carried here—[*He points behind the scenes*]—in that corner; . . . Your men can use it in case of need.

A CADET
[*reeling slightly*].

Charming attention!

ANOTHER
[*with a gracious smile*].

Kind solicitude!

DE GUICHE.

How? they are all gone crazy!

[*Drily.*]

As you are not used to cannon, beware of the recoil.

FIRST CADET.

Pooh!

DE GUICHE

[*furious, going up to him*].

But . . .

THE CADET.

Gascon cannons never recoil!

DE GUICHE

[*taking him by the arm and shaking him*]

You are tipsy!—but what with?

THE CADET

[*grandiloquently*].

—With the smell of powder!

DE GUICHE

[*shrugging his shoulders and pushing him away, then going quickly to* ROXANE].

Briefly, Madame, what decision do you deign to take?

ROXANE.

I stay here.

DE GUICHE.

You must fly!

ROXANE.

No! I will stay.

DE GUICHE.

Since things are thus, give me a musket, one of you!

CARBON.

Wherefore?

DE GUICHE.

Because I too—mean to remain.

CYRANO.

At last! This is true valour, Sir!

FIRST CADET.

Then you are a Gascon after all, spite of your lace collar?

ROXANE.

What is all this?

DE GUICHE.

I leave no woman in peril.

SECOND CADET

[*to the* FIRST].

Hark you! Think you not we might give him something to eat?

[*All the viands reappear as if by magic.*]

DE GUICHE

[*whose eyes sparkle*].

Victuals!

THE THIRD CADET.

Yes, you 'll see them coming from under every coat!

DE GUICHE

[*controlling himself, haughtily*].

Do you think I will eat your leavings?

CYRANO

[*saluting him*].

You make progress.

DE GUICHE

[*proudly, with a light touch of accent on the word 'breaking'*].

I will fight without br-r-eaking my fast!

FIRST CADET

[*wild with delight*].

Br-r-r-eaking! He has got the accent!

DE GUICHE

[*laughing*].

I?

THE CADET.

'Tis a Gascon!

[*All begin to dance.*]

CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX

[*who had disappeared behind the rampart, reappearing on the ridge*].

I have drawn my pikemen up in line. They are a resolute troop.

[*He points to a row of pikes, the tops of which are seen over the ridge.*]

DE GUICHE

[*bowing to* ROXANE].

Will you accept my hand, and accompany me while I review them?

[*She takes it, and they go up towards the rampart. All uncover and follow them.*]

CHRISTIAN

[*going to* CYRANO, *eagerly*].

Tell me quickly !

[*As* ROXANE *appears on the ridge, the tops of the lances disappear, lowered for the salute, and a shout is raised. She bows.*]

THE PIKEMEN

[*outside*].

Vivat !

CHRISTIAN.

What is this secret ?

CYRANO.

If Roxane should . . .

CHRISTIAN.

Should ? . . .

CYRANO.

Speak of the letters ? . . .

CHRISTIAN.

Yes ! I know ! . . .

CYRANO.

Do not spoil all by seeming surprised . . .

CHRISTIAN.

At what ?

CYRANO.

I must explain to you ! . . . Oh ! 'tis no great matter,—I but thought of it to-day on seeing her. You have . . .

CHRISTIAN.

Tell quickly!

CYRANO.

You have . . . written to her oftener than you think. . . .

CHRISTIAN.

How so?

CYRANO.

Thus, 'faith! I had taken it in hand to express your flame for you! . . . At times I wrote without saying, 'I am writing'!

CHRISTIAN.

Ah! . . .

CYRANO.

'Tis simple enough!

CHRISTIAN.

But how did you contrive, since we have been cut off, thus . . . to? . . .

CYRANO.

. . . Oh! before dawn . . . I was able to get through . . .

CHRISTIAN

[*folding his arms*].

That was simple too? And how oft, pray you, have I written? . . . Twice in the week? . . . Three times? . . . Four? . . .

CYRANO.

More often still.

CHRISTIAN.

What! Every day?

CYRANO.

Yes, every day,—twice.

CHRISTIAN

[*violently*].

And that became so mad a joy for you, that you braved death . . .

CYRANO

[*seeing* ROXANE *returning*].

Hush! Not before her!

[*He goes hurriedly into his tent.*]

SCENE VIII

ROXANE, CHRISTIAN. *In the distance* CADETS *coming and going.* CARBON *and* DE GUICHE *give orders.*

ROXANE

[*running up to* CHRISTIAN].

Ah, Christian, at last! . . .

CHRISTIAN

[*taking her hands*].

Now tell me why—
Why, by these fearful paths so perilous—
Across these ranks of ribald soldiery,
You have come?

ROXANE.

Love, your letters brought me here!

CHRISTIAN.

What say you?

ROXANE.

'Tis your fault if I ran risks!
Your letters turned my head! Ah! all this month,
How many!—and the last one ever bettered
The one that went before!

CHRISTIAN.

What!—for a few
Inconsequent love-letters!

ROXANE.

Hold your peace!
Ah! you cannot conceive it! Ever since
That night, when, in a voice all new to me,
Under my window you revealed your soul—
Ah! ever since I have adored you! Now
Your letters all this whole month long!—meseemed
As if I heard that voice so tender, true,
Sheltering, close! Thy fault, I say! It drew me,
The voice o' th' night! Oh! wise Penelope
Would ne'er have stayed to broider on her hearth-stone,
If her Ulysses could have writ such letters!
But would have cast away her silken bobbins,
And fled to join him, mad for love as Helen!

CHRISTIAN.

But . . .

ROXANE.

I read, read again—grew faint for love;
I was thine utterly. Each separate page

Was like a fluttering flower-petal, loosed
From your own soul, and wafted thus to mine.
Imprinted in each burning word was love
Sincere, all-powerful . . .

CHRISTIAN.

A love sincere!

Can that be felt, Roxane?

ROXANE.

Ay, that it can!

CHRISTIAN.

You come . . .?

ROXANE.

O Christian, my true lord, I come—
(Were I to throw myself, here, at your knees,
You would raise me—but 'tis my soul I lay
At your feet—you can raise it nevermore!)
—I come to crave your pardon. (Ay, 'tis time
To sue for pardon, now that death may come!)
For the insult done to you when, frivolous,
At first I loved you only for your face!

CHRISTIAN
[*horror-stricken*].

Roxane!

ROXANE.

And later, love—less frivolous—
Like a bird that spreads its wings, but cannot fly—
Arrested by your beauty, by your soul
Drawn close—I loved for both at once!

CHRISTIAN.

And now?

ROXANE.

Ah! you yourself have triumphed o'er yourself,
And now, I love you only for your soul!

CHRISTIAN
[*stepping backwards*].

Roxane!

ROXANE.

Be happy. To be loved for beauty—
A poor disguise that time so soon wears threadbare—
Must be to noble souls—to souls aspiring—
A torture. Your dear thoughts have now effacèd
That beauty that so won me at the outset.
Now I see clearer—and I no more see it!

CHRISTIAN.

Oh! . . .

ROXANE.

You are doubtful of such victory?

CHRISTIAN
[*pained*].

Roxane!

ROXANE.

I see you cannot yet believe it.
Such love . . .?

CHRISTIAN.

I do not ask such love as that!
I would be loved more simply; for . . .

ROXANE.

For that
Which they have all in turns loved in thee?—Shame!
Oh! be loved henceforth in a better way!

CHRISTIAN.

No! the first love was best!

ROXANE.

Ah! how you err!
'Tis now that I love best—love well! 'Tis that
Which is thy true self, see!—that I adore!
Were your brilliance dimmed . . .

CHRISTIAN.

Hush!

ROXANE.

I should love still!
Ay, if your beauty should to-day depart . . .

CHRISTIAN.

Say not so!

ROXANE.

Ay, I say it!

CHRISTIAN.

Ugly? How?

ROXANE.

Ugly! I swear I'd love you still!

CHRISTIAN.

My God!

ROXANE.

Are you content at last?

CHRISTIAN

[*in a choked voice*].

Ay! . . .

ROXANE.

What is wrong?

CHRISTIAN

[*gently pushing her away*].

Nothing. . . . I have two words to say:—one second . . .

ROXANE.

But? . . .

CHRISTIAN

[*pointing to the* CADETS].

Those poor fellows, shortly doomed to death,—
My love deprives them of the sight of you:
Go,—speak to them, smile on them ere they die!

ROXANE

[*deeply affected*].

Dear Christian! . . .

[*She goes up to the* CADETS, *who respectfully crowd round her.*]

SCENE IX

CHRISTIAN, CYRANO. *At back* ROXANE *talking to* CARBON *and some* CADETS.

CHRISTIAN

[*calling towards* CYRANO'S *tent*].

Cyrano!

CYRANO
[*reappearing, fully armed*].
What? Why so pale?

CHRISTIAN.
She does not love me!

CYRANO.
What?

CHRISTIAN.
'Tis you she loves!

CYRANO.
No!

CHRISTIAN.
—For she loves me only for my soul!

CYRANO.
Truly?

CHRISTIAN.
Yes! Thus—you see, that soul is you, . . .
Therefore, 'tis you she loves!—And you—love her!

CYRANO
I?

CHRISTIAN.
Oh, I know it!

CYRANO.
Ay, 'tis true!

CHRISTIAN.
You love
To madness!

CYRANO.

Ay! and worse!

CHRISTIAN.

Then tell her so!

CYRANO.

No!

CHRISTIAN.

And why not!

CYRANO.

Look at my face!—be answered!

CHRISTIAN.

She'd love me—were I ugly.

CYRANO.

Said she so?

CHRISTIAN.

Ay! in those words!

CYRANO.

I'm glad she told you that!
But pooh!—believe it not! I am well pleased
She thought to tell you. Take it not for truth.
Never grow ugly:—she'd reproach me then!

CHRISTIAN.

That I intend discovering!

CYRANO.

No! I beg!

CHRISTIAN.

Ay! she shall choose between us!—Tell her all!

CYRANO.

No! no! I will not have it! Spare me this

CHRISTIAN.

Because my face is haply fair, shall I
Destroy your happiness? 'Twere too unjust!

CYRANO.

And I,—because by Nature's freak I have
The gift to say—all that perchance you feel,
Shall I be fatal to your happiness?

CHRISTIAN.

Tell all!

CYRANO.

It is ill done to tempt me thus!

CHRISTIAN.

Too long I've borne about within myself
A rival to myself— I'll make an end!

CYRANO.

Christian!

CHRISTIAN

Our union, without witness—secret—
Clandestine,—can be easily dissolved
If we survive.

CYRANO.

My God!—he still persists!

CHRISTIAN.

I will be loved myself—or not at all!
—I'll go see what they do—there, at the end
Of the post: speak to her, and then let her choose
One of us two!

CYRANO.

It will be you!

CHRISTIAN.

Pray God!

[*He calls.*]

Roxane!

CYRANO.

No! no!

ROXANE

[*coming up quickly*].

What?

CHRISTIAN.

Cyrano has things

Important for your ear. . . .

[*She hastens to* CYRANO. CHRISTIAN *goes out.*]

SCENE X.

ROXANE, CYRANO. *Then* LE BRET, CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX, *the* CADETS, RAGUENEAU, DE GUICHE, *etc.*

ROXANE.

Important, how? . . .

CYRANO

[*in despair. To* ROXANE].

He 's gone! 'Tis nought!—Oh, you know how he sees

Importance in a trifle!

ROXANE
[*warmly*].
Did he doubt
Of what I said?—Ah yes, I saw he doubted!

CYRANO
[*taking her hand*].
But are you sure you told him all the truth?

ROXANE.
Yes, I would love him were he . . .
[*She hesitates.*]

CYRANO.
Does that word
Embarrass you before my face, Roxane?

ROXANE.
I . . .

CYRANO
[*smiling sadly*].
'Twill not hurt me! Say it! If he were
Ugly! . . .

ROXANE.
Yes, ugly!
[*Musket-report outside.*]
Hark! I hear a shot

CYRANO
[*ardently*].
Hideous!

ROXANE.
Hideous! yes!

CYRANO.

Disfigured.

ROXANE.

Ay!

CYRANO.

Grotesque?

ROXANE.

He could not be grotesque to me!

CYRANO.

You 'd love the same? . . .

ROXANE.

The same—nay, even more!

CYRANO

[*losing command over himself—aside*].

My God! it 's true, perchance, love waits me there!

[*To* ROXANE.]

I . . . Roxane . . . listen . . .

LE BRET

[*entering hurriedly—to* CYRANO].

Cyrano!

CYRANO

[*turning round*].

What?

LE BRET.

Hush!

[*He whispers something to him.*]

CYRANO

[*letting go* ROXANE'S *hand and exclaiming*]
Ah God!

ROXANE.

What is it?

CYRANO

[*to himself—stunned*].
All is over now.
[*Renewed reports.*]

ROXANE.

What is the matter? Hark! another shot!
[*She goes up to look outside.*]

CYRANO.

It is too late, now I can never tell!

ROXANE

[*trying to rush out*].
What has chanced?

CYRANO

[*rushing to stop her*].
Nothing!
[*Some* CADETS *enter, trying to hide something they are carrying, and close round it to prevent* ROXANE *approaching.*]

ROXANE.

And those men?

CYRANO

[*drawing her away*].

Let be!—

ROXANE.

What were you just about to say before . . .?

CYRANO.

What was I saying? Nothing now, I swear!

[*Solemnly.*]

I swear that Christian's soul, his nature, were . . .

[*Hastily correcting himself.*]

Nay, that they are, the noblest, greatest . . .

ROXANE.

Were?

[*with a loud scream.*]

Oh!

[*She rushes up, pushing every one aside.*]

CYRANO.

All is over now!

ROXANE

[*seeing* CHRISTIAN *lying on the ground, wrapped in his cloak*].

O Christian!

LE BRET

[*to* CYRANO].

Struck by the first shot of the enemy!

[ROXANE *flings herself down by* CHRISTIAN. *Fresh reports of cannon—clash of arms—clamour—beating of drums.*]

CARBON

[*with sword in the air*].

They come! Your muskets!

[*Followed by the* CADETS, *he passes to the other side of the ramparts.*]

ROXANE.

Christian!

THE VOICE OF CARBON

[*from the other side*].

Ho! make haste!

ROXANE.

Christian!

CARBON.

Form line!

ROXANE.

Christian!

CARBON.

Handle your match!

[RAGUENEAU *rushes up, bringing water in a helmet.*]

CHRISTIAN

[*in a dying voice*].

Roxane!

CYRANO

[*quickly, whispering into* CHRISTIAN'S *ear, while* ROXANE *distractedly tears a piece of linen from his breast, which she dips into the water, trying to stanch the bleeding*].

I told her all. She loves you still.

[CHRISTIAN *closes his eyes.*]

ROXANE.

How, my sweet love?

CARBON.

Draw ramrods!

ROXANE
[*to* CYRANO].

He is not dead?

CARBON.

Open your charges with your teeth!

ROXANE.

His cheek
Grows cold against my own!

CARBON.

Ready! Present!

ROXANE
[*seeing a letter in* CHRISTIAN'S *doublet*].

A letter! . . .
'Tis for me!
[*She opens it.*]

CYRANO
[*aside*].

My letter!

CARBON.

Fire!

[*Musket reports—shouts—noise of battle.*]

CYRANO
[*trying to disengage his hand, which* ROXANE *on her knees is holding*].

But, Roxane, hark, they fight!

ROXANE

[*detaining him*].

Stay yet a while.
For he is dead. You knew him, you alone.

[*Weeping quietly.*]

Ah, was not his a beauteous soul, a soul
Wondrous!

CYRANO

[*standing up—bareheaded*].

Ay, Roxane.

ROXANE.

An inspired poet?

CYRANO.

Ay, Roxane.

ROXANE.

And a mind sublime?

CYRANO.

Oh yes.

ROXANE.

A heart too deep for common minds to plumb,
A spirit subtle, charming?

CYRANO

[*firmly*].

Ay, Roxane.

ROXANE

[*flinging herself on the dead body*].

Dead, my love!

CYRANO

[*aside—drawing his sword*].

Ay, and let me die to-day,
Since, all unconscious, she mourns me—in him!

[*Sounds of trumpets in the distance.*]

DE GUICHE

[*appearing on the ramparts—bareheaded—with a wound on his forehead—in a voice of thunder*].

It is the signal! Trumpet flourishes!
The French bring the provisions into camp!
Hold but the place a while!

ROXANE.

See, there is Blood
Upon the letter—tears!

A VOICE

[*outside—shouting*].

Surrender!

VOICE OF CADETS.

No!

RAGUENEAU

[*standing on the top of his carriage, watches the battle over the edge of the ramparts*].

The danger's ever greater!

CYRANO

[*to* DE GUICHE—*pointing to* ROXANE].

I will charge!
Take her away!

ROXANE

[*kissing the letter—in a half-extinguished voice*].

O God! his tears! his blood!

RAGUENEAU

[*jumping down from the carriage and rushing towards her*].

She 's swooned away !

DE GUICHE

[*on the rampart - to the* CADETS—*with fury*].

Stand fast !

A VOICE

[*outside*].

Lay down your arms !

THE CADETS.

No !

CYRANO

[*to* DE GUICHE].

Now that you have proved your valour, Sir,

[*Pointing to* ROXANE.]

Fly, and save her !

DE GUICHE

[*rushing to* ROXANE, *and carrying her away in his arms*].

So be it ! Gain but time,

The victory 's ours !

CYRANO.

Good.

[*Calling out to* ROXANE, *whom* DE GUICHE, *aided by* RAGUENEAU, *is bearing away in a fainting condition.*]

Farewell, Roxane !

[*Tumult. Shouts.* CADETS *reappear, wounded, falling on the scene.* CYRANO, *rushing to the battle, is stopped by* CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX, *who is streaming with blood.*]

CARBON.

We are breaking! I am wounded—wounded twice!

CYRANO

[*shouting to the* GASCONS].

Gascons! Ho, Gascons! Never turn your backs!

[*To* CARBON, *whom he is supporting.*]

Have no fear! I have two deaths to avenge:
My friend who's slain;—and my dead happiness!

[*They come down*—CYRANO *brandishing the lance to which is attached* ROXANE'S *handkerchief.*]

Float there! laced kerchief broidered with her name!

[*He sticks it in the ground and shouts to the* CADETS].

Fall on them, Gascons! Crush them!

[*To the* FIFER.]

Fifer, play!

[*The fife plays. The wounded try to rise. Some* CADETS, *falling one over the other down the slope, group themselves round* CYRANO *and the little flag. The carriage is crowded with men inside and outside, and, bristling with arquebuses, is turned into a fortress.*]

A CADET

[*appearing on the crest, beaten backwards, but still fighting, cries*]

They're climbing the redoubt!

[*and falls dead.*]

CYRANO.

Let us salute them!

[*The rampart is covered instantly by a formidable row of enemies. The standards of the Imperialists are raised.*]

Fire!

[*General discharge.*]

A CRY IN THE ENEMY'S RANKS.

Fire!

[*A deadly answering volley. The* CADETS *fall on all sides.*]

A SPANISH OFFICER

[*uncovering*].

Who are these men who rush on death?

CYRANO

[*reciting, erect, amid a storm of bullets*].

The bold Cadets of Gascony,
Of Carbon of Castel-Jaloux!
Brawling, swaggering boastfully,

[*He rushes forward, followed by a few survivors.*]

The bold Cadets . . .

[*His voice is drowned in the battle.*]

CURTAIN.

ACT V

Cyrano's Gazette.

Fifteen years later, in 1655. *Park of the Sisters of the Holy Cross in Paris. Magnificent trees. On the left the house: broad steps on to which open several doors. An enormous plane-tree in the middle of the stage, standing alone. On the right, amongst big boxwood trees, a semicircular stone bench.*

The whole background of the stage is crossed by an alley of chestnut-trees leading on the right hand to the door of a chapel seen through the branches. Through the double row of trees of this alley are seen lawns, other alleys, clusters of trees, winding of the park, the sky.

The chapel opens by a little side-door on to a colonnade which is wreathed with autumn leaves, and is lost to view a little further on in the right-hand foreground behind the boxwood.

It is autumn. All the foliage is red against the fresh green of the lawns. The green boxwood and yews stand out dark.

Under each tree a patch of yellow leaves.

The stage is strewn with dead leaves, which rustle under foot in the alleys, and half cover the steps and benches.

Between the benches on the right hand and the tree a large embroidery frame, in front of which a little chair has been set.

Baskets full of skeins and balls of wool. A tapestry begun.

At the rising of the curtain nuns are walking to and fro in the park; some are seated on the bench around an older Sister.

The leaves are falling.

SCENE I

MOTHER MARGUERITE, SISTER MARTHA, SISTER CLAIRE, *other* SISTERS.

SISTER MARTHA

[*to* MOTHER MARGUERITE].

Sister Claire glanced in the mirror, once—nay, twice,
To see if her coif suited.

MOTHER MARGUERITE

[*to* SISTER CLAIRE].

'Tis not well.

SISTER CLAIRE.

But I saw Sister Martha take a plum
Out of the tart.

MOTHER MARGUERITE

[*to* SISTER MARTHA].

That was ill done, my sister.

SISTER CLAIRE.

A little glance!

SISTER MARTHA.

And such a little plum!

MOTHER MARGUERITE.

I shall tell this to Monsieur Cyrano.

SISTER CLAIRE.

Nay, prithee do not!—he will mock!

SISTER MARTHA.

He'll say
We nuns are vain!

SISTER CLAIRE.

And greedy!

MOTHER MARGUERITE
[*smiling*].

Ay, and kind!

SISTER CLAIRE.

Is it not true, pray, Mother Marguerite,
That he has come, each week, on Saturday
For ten years, to the convent!

MOTHER MARGUERITE.

Ay! and more!
Ever since—fourteen years ago—the day
His cousin brought here, 'midst our woollen coifs,
The worldly mourning of her widow's veil,
Like a blackbird's wing among the convent doves!

SISTER MARTHA.

He only has the skill to turn her mind
From grief—unsoftened yet by Time—unhealed!

ALL THE SISTERS.

He is so droll!—It's cheerful when he comes!—
He teases us!—But we all like him well!—
—We make him pasties of angelica!

SISTER MARTHA.

But, he is not a faithful Catholic!

SISTER CLAIRE.

We will convert him!

THE SISTERS.

Yes! Yes!

MOTHER MARGUERITE.

I forbid,
My daughters, you attempt that subject. Nay,
Weary him not—he might less oft come here!

SISTER MARTHA.

But . . . God . . .

MOTHER MARGUERITE.

Nay, never fear! God knows him well!

SISTER MARTHA.

But—every Saturday, when he arrives,
He tells me, 'Sister, I eat meat on Friday!'

MOTHER MARGUERITE.

Ah! says he so? Well, the last time he came
Food had not passed his lips for two whole days!

SISTER MARTHA.

Mother!

MOTHER MARGUERITE.

He's poor.

SISTER MARTHA.

Who told you so, dear Mother?

MOTHER MARGUERITE.

Monsieur le Bret.

SISTER MARTHA.

None help him?

MOTHER MARGUERITE.

He permits not

[*In an alley at the back* ROXANE *appears, dressed in black with a widow's coif and veil.* DE GUICHE, *imposing-looking and visibly aged, walks by her side. They saunter slowly.* MOTHER MARGUERITE *rises.*]

'Tis time we go in; Madame Madeleine
Walks in the garden with a visitor.

SISTER MARTHA

[*to* SISTER CLAIRE, *in a low voice*].

The Marshal of Grammont?

SISTER CLAIRE

[*looking at him*].

'Tis he, I think.

SISTER MARTHA.

'Tis many months now since he came to see her.

THE SISTERS.

He is so busy!—The Court,—the camp! . . .

SISTER CLAIRE.

The world!

[*They go out.* DE GUICHE *and* ROXANE *come forward in silence, and stop close to the embroidery frame.*]

SCENE II

ROXANE; *the* DUKE DE GRAMMONT, *formerly* COUNT DE GUICHE. *Then* LE BRET *and* RAGUENEAU.

THE DUKE.

And you stay here still— ever vainly fair,
Ever in weeds?

ROXANE.

Ever.

THE DUKE.

Still faithful?

ROXANE.

Still.

THE DUKE.

[*after a pause*].

Am I forgiven?

ROXANE.

Ay, since I am here.

[*Another pause.*]

THE DUKE.

His was a soul, you say? . . .

ROXANE.

Ah!—when you knew him!

THE DUKE.

Ah, may be! . . . I, perchance, too little knew him.
. . . And his last letter, ever next your heart?

ROXANE.

Hung from this chain, a gentle scapulary.

THE DUKE.

And, dead, you love him still?

ROXANE.

At times,—meseems
He is but partly dead,—our hearts still speak,
As if his love, still living, wrapped me round!

THE DUKE

[*after another pause*].

Cyrano comes to see you?

ROXANE.

Often, ay.
Dear, kind old friend! We call him my 'Gazette.'
He never fails to come: beneath this tree
They place his chair, if it be fine:—I wait,
I broider;—the clock strikes;—at the last stroke
I hear,—for now I never turn to look—
Too sure to hear his cane tap down the steps;
He seats himself:—with gentle raillery
He mocks my tapestry that 's never done;
He tells me all the gossip of the week . . .
[LE BRET *appears on the steps.*]
Why, here 's Le Bret!
[LE BRET *descends.*]
How goes it with our friend?

LE BRET.

Ill!—very ill.

THE DUKE.

How?

ROXANE

[*to the* DUKE].

He exaggerates!

LE BRET.

All that I prophesied : desertion, want ! . . .
His letters now make him fresh enemies !—
Attacking the sham nobles, sham devout,
Sham brave,—the thieving authors,—all the world !

ROXANE.

Ah ! but his sword still holds them all in check ;
None get the better of him.

THE DUKE
[*shaking his head*].

Time will show !

LE BRET.

Ah, but I fear for him—not man's attack,—
Solitude—hunger— cold December days,
That wolf-like steal into his chamber drear :—
Lo ! the assassins that I fear for him !
Each day he tightens by one hole his belt :
That poor nose—tinted like old ivory .
He has retained one shabby suit of serge.

THE DUKE.

Ay, there is one who has no prize of Fortune !—
Yet is not to be pitied !

LE BRET
[*with a bitter smile*].

My Lord Marshal ! . .

THE DUKE.

Pity him not ! He has lived out his vows,
Free in his thoughts, as in his actions free !

LE BRET

[*in the same tone*].

My Lord ! . . .

THE DUKE

[*haughtily*].

True ! I have all, and he has nought ; . . .
Yet I were proud to take his hand !

[*Bowing to* ROXANE.]

Adieu !

ROXANE.

I go with you.

[*The* DUKE *bows to* LE BRET, *and goes with* ROXANE *towards the steps.*]

THE DUKE

[*pausing, while she goes up.*]

Ay, true,—I envy him.
Look you, when life is brimful of success
—Though the past hold no action foul—one feels
A thousand self-disgusts, of which the sum
Is not remorse, but a dim, vague unrest ;
And, as one mounts the steps of worldly fame,
The Dukes' furred mantles trail within their folds
A sound of dead illusions, vain regrets,
A rustle—scarce a whisper,—like as when,
Mounting the terrace steps, your mourning robe
Sweeps in its train the dying autumn leaves.

ROXANE

[*ironically*].

You are pensive ?

THE DUKE.

True! I am!

[*As he is going out, suddenly.*]

Monsieur Le Bret!

[*To* ROXANE.]

A word, with your permission?

[*He goes to* LE BRET, *and in a low voice.*]

True, that none
Dare to attack your friend;—but many hate him;
Yesterday, at the Queen's card-play 'twas said
'That Cyrano may die—by accident!'
Let him stay in—be prudent!

LE BRET

[*raising his arms to heaven*].

Prudent! He! . . .
He's coming here. I'll warn him—but! . . .

ROXANE

[*who has stayed on the steps, to a* SISTER *who comes towards her*].

What is it?

THE SISTER.

Ragueneau would see you, Madame.

ROXANE.

Let him come.

[*To the* DUKE *and* LE BRET.]

He comes to tell his troubles. Having been
An author (save the mark!)—poor fellow,—now
By turns he's singer . . .

LE BRET.

Bathing-man . . .

ROXANE.

Then actor . . .

LE BRET.

Beadle . . .

ROXANE.

Wig-maker . . .

LE BRET.

Teacher of the lute . . .

ROXANE.

What will he be to-day, by chance?

RAGUENEAU
[*entering hurriedly*].

Ah! Madame!

[*He sees* LE BRET.]

Ah! you here, Sir!

ROXANE
[*smiling*].

Tell all your miseries
To him; I will return anon.

RAGUENEAU.

But, Madame . . .

[ROXANE *goes out with the* DUKE. *He goes towards* LE BRET.]

SCENE III

LE BRET, RAGUENEAU.

RAGUENEAU.

Since you are here, 'tis best she should not know!
I was going to your friend just now—was but

A few steps from the house, when I saw him
Go out. I hurried to him. Saw him turn
The corner . . . suddenly, from out a window
Where he was passing—was it chance? . . . may be!
A lackey let fall a large piece of wood.

LE BRET.

Cowards! O Cyrano!

RAGUENEAU.

I ran—I saw . . .

LE BRET.

'Tis hideous!

RAGUENEAU.

Saw our poet, Sir—our friend—
Struck to the ground,—a large wound in his head!

LE BRET.

He 's dead?

RAGUENEAU.

No—but—I bore him to his room . . .
Ah! his room! What a thing to see!—that garret!

LE BRET.

He suffers?

RAGUENEAU.

No, his consciousness has flown.

LE BRET.

Saw you a doctor?

RAGUENEAU.

One was kind—he came.

LE BRET.

My poor Cyrano! -We must not tell this
To Roxane suddenly.—What said this leech?—

RAGUENEAU.

Said,—what, I know not—fever, meningitis!—
Ah! could you see him—all his head bound up!—
But let us haste!—There's no one by his bed!—
And if he try to rise, Sir, he might die!

RAGUENEAU

[*dragging him towards the right*].

Come! Through the chapel! 'Tis the quickest way

ROXANE

[*appearing on the steps, and seeing* LE BRET *go away by the colonnade leading to the chapel door*].

Monsieur le Bret!

[LE BRET *and* RAGUENEAU *disappear without answering*].

Le Bret goes—when I call!
'Tis some new trouble of good Ragueneau's.

[*She descends the steps.*]

SCENE IV

ROXANE *alone.* *Two* SISTERS, *for a moment.*

ROXANE.

Ah! what a beauty in September's close!
My sorrow's eased. April's joy dazzled it,
But autumn wins it with her dying calm.

[*She seats herself at the embroidery frame. Two* SISTERS *come out of the house, and bring a large arm-chair under the tree.*]

There comes the famous arm-chair, where he sits,
Dear faithful friend!

SISTER MARTHA.

It is the parlour's best!

ROXANE.

Thanks, sister.

[*The* SISTERS *go.*]

He'll be here now.

[*She seats herself. A clock strikes.*]

The hour strikes.
—My silks?—Why, now, the hour's struck! How strange
To be behind his time, at last, to-day!
Perhaps the portress—where's my thimble? . . . Here!
—Is preaching to him.

[*A pause.*]

Yes, she must be preaching!
Surely he must come soon!—Ah! a dead leaf!—

[*She brushes off the leaf from her work.*]

Nothing, besides, could—scissors?—In my bag!
—Could hinder him . . .

A SISTER

[*coming to the steps*].

Monsieur de Bergerac.

SCENE V

ROXANE

[*without turning round*].

What was I saying? . . .

[*She embroiders.* CYRANO, *very pale, his hat pulled down over his eyes, appears. The* SISTER *who had announced him retires. He descends the steps slowly, with a visible difficulty in holding himself upright, bearing heavily on his cane.* ROXANE *still works at her tapestry.*]

Time has dimmed the tints . . .

How harmonise them now?

[*To* CYRANO, *with playful reproach.*]

For the first time

Late!—For the first time, all these fourteen years!

CYRANO

[*who has succeeded in reaching the chair, and has seated himself— in a lively voice, which is in great contrast with his pale face*].

Ay! It is villainous! I raged—was stayed . . .

ROXANE.

By? . . .

CYRANO.

By a bold, unwelcome visitor.

ROXANE

[*absently, working*].

Some creditor?

CYRANO.

Ay, cousin,—the last creditor
Who has a debt to claim from me.

ROXANE.

And you
Have paid it?

CYRANO.

No, not yet! I put it off;
—Said, 'Cry you mercy; this is Saturday,
When I have got a standing rendezvous
That nought defers. Call in an hour's time!'

ROXANE

[*carelessly*].

Oh, well, a creditor can always wait!
I shall not let you go ere twilight falls.

CYRANO.

Haply perforce I quit you ere it falls!

[*He shuts his eyes, and is silent for a moment.* SISTER MARTHA *crosses the park from the chapel to the flight of steps.* ROXANE, *seeing her, signs to her to approach.*]

ROXANE

[*to* CYRANO].

How now? You have not teased the Sister?

CYRANO

[*hastily opening his eyes*].

True!

[*In a comically loud voice.*]

Sister! come here!

[*The* SISTER *glides up to him.*]

Ha-ha! What? Those bright eyes
Bent ever on the ground?

SISTER MARTHA

[*who makes a movement of astonishment on seeing his face*].

Oh!

CYRANO

[*in a whisper, pointing to* ROXANE].

Hush! 'tis nought!

[*Loudly, in a blustering voice.*]

I broke fast yesterday!

SISTER MARTHA.

[*aside*].

I know, I know!
That 's how he is so pale! Come presently
To the refectory, I 'll make you drink
A famous bowl of soup . . . You 'll come?

CYRANO.

Ay, ay!

SISTER MARTHA.

There, see! You are more reasonable to-day!

ROXANE

[*who hears them whispering*].

The Sister would convert you?

SISTER MARTHA.

Nay, not I!

CYRANO.

Hold! but it's true! You preach to me no more,
You, once so glib with holy words! I am
Astonished! . . .

[*With burlesque fury.*]

Stay, I will surprise you too!
Hark! I permit you . . .

[*He pretends to be seeking for something to tease her with, and to have found it*].

. . . It is something new!—
To—pray for me, to-night, at chapel-time!

ROXANE.

Oh! oh!

CYRANO

[*laughing*].

Good Sister Martha is struck dumb!

SISTER MARTHA

[*gently*].

I did not wait your leave to pray for you.

[*She goes out.*]

CYRANO

[*turning to* ROXANE, *who is still bending over her work*].

That tapestry! Beshrew me if my eyes
Will ever see it finished!

ROXANE.

I was sure
To hear that well-known jest !
[*A light breeze causes the leaves to fall.*]

CYRANO.

The autumn leaves !

ROXANE

[*lifting her head, and looking down the distant alley*].

Soft golden brown, like a Venetian's hair.
—See how they fall !

CYRANO.

Ay, see how brave they fall,
In their last journey downward from the bough,
To rot within the clay ; yet, lovely still,
Hiding the horror of the last decay,
With all the wayward grace of careless flight !

ROXANE.

What, melancholy—you ?

CYRANO

[*collecting himself*].

Nay, nay, Roxane !

ROXANE.

Then let the dead leaves fall the way they will . . .
And chat. What, have you nothing new to tell,
My Court Gazette ?

CYRANO.

Listen.

ROXANE.

Ah !

CYRANO

[growing whiter and whiter].

Saturday
The nineteenth : having eaten to excess
Of pear-conserve, the King felt feverish ;
The lancet quelled this treasonable revolt,
And the august pulse beats at normal pace.
At the Queen's ball on Sunday thirty score
Of best white waxen tapers were consumed.
Our troops, they say, have chased the Austrians.
Four sorcerers were hanged. The little dog
Of Madame d'Athis took a dose . . .

ROXANE.

I bid
You hold your tongue, Monsieur de Bergerac !

CYRANO.

Monday—not much—Claire changed protector.

ROXANE.

Oh !

CYRANO

[whose face changes more and more].

Tuesday, the Court repaired to Fontainebleau.
Wednesday, the Montglat said to Comte de
Fiesque . . .
No! Thursday—Mancini, Queen of France! *(almost!)*
Friday, the Montglat to Count Fiesque said—'Yes!'
And Saturday the twenty-sixth . . .

[He closes his eyes. His head falls forward. Silence.]

ROXANE

[*surprised at his voice ceasing, turns round, looks at him, and rising, terrified*].

He swoons !

[*She runs towards him crying.*]

Cyrano !

CYRANO

[*opening his eyes, in an unconcerned voice*].

What is this ?

[*He sees* ROXANE *bending over him, and, hastily pressing his hat on his head, and shrinking back in his chair.*]

Nay, on my word

'Tis nothing ! Let me be !

ROXANE.

But . . .

CYRANO.

That old wound

Of Arras, sometimes,—as you know . . .

ROXANE.

Dear friend !

CYRANO.

'Tis nothing, 'twill pass soon ;

[*He smiles with an effort.*]

See !—it has passed !

ROXANE.

Each of us has his wound ; ay, I have mine,—

Never healed up— not healed yet, my old wound !

[*She puts her hand on her breast.*]

'Tis here, beneath this letter brown with age,
All stained with tear-drops, and still stained with blood
[*Twilight begins to fall.*]

CYRANO.

His letter! Ah! you promised me one day
That I should read it.

ROXANE.

What would you?—His letter?

CYRANO.

Yes, I would fain,—to-day . . .

ROXANE

[*giving the bag hung at her neck*].

See! here it is!

CYRANO

[*taking it*].

Have I your leave to open?

ROXANE.

Open—read!

[*She comes back to her tapestry frame, folds it up, sorts her wools.*]

CYRANO

[*reading*].

'Roxane, adieu! I soon must die!
This very night, belovèd; and I
Feel my soul heavy with love untold.
I die! No more, as in days of old,
My loving, longing eyes will feast
On your least gesture—ay, the least!

I mind me the way you touch your cheek
With your finger, softly, as you speak!
Ah me! I know that gesture well!
My heart cries out!—I cry "Farewell!"'

ROXANE.

But how you read that letter! One would think . . .

CYRANO

[*continuing to read*]

'My life, my love, my jewel, my sweet,
My heart has been yours in every beat!'

[*The shades of evening fall imperceptibly.*]

ROXANE.

You read in such a voice – so strange—and yet—
It is not the first time I hear that voice!

[*She comes nearer very softly, without his perceiving it, passes behind his chair, and, noiselessly leaning over him looks at the letter. The darkness deepens.*]

CYRANO.

'Here, dying, and there, in the land on high,
I am he who loved, who loves you,—I . . .'

ROXANE

[*putting her hand on his shoulder*].

How can you read? It is too dark to see!

[*He starts, turns, sees her close to him. Suddenly alarmed, he holds his head down. Then in the dusk, which has now completely enfolded*

them, she says, very slowly, with clasped hands,]

And, fourteen years long, he has played this part
Of the kind old friend who comes to laugh and chat!

CYRANO.

Roxane!

ROXANE.

'Twas you!

CYRANO.

No, never; Roxane, no!

ROXANE.

I should have guessed, each time he said my name!

CYRANO.

No; it was not I!

ROXANE.

It was you!

CYRANO.

I swear!

ROXANE.

I see through all the generous counterfeit—
The letters—you!

CYRANO.

No.

ROXANE.

The sweet, mad, love-words!
You!

CYRANO.

No!

ROXANE.

The voice that thrilled the night—you, you!

CYRANO.

I swear you err.

ROXANE.

The soul—it was your soul!

CYRANO.

I loved you not.

ROXANE.

You loved me not?

CYRANO.

'Twas he!

ROXANE.

You loved me!

CYRANO.

No!

ROXANE.

See! how you falter now!

CYRANO.

No, my sweet love, I never loved you!

ROXANE.

Ah!

Things dead, long dead, see! how they rise again!
—Why, why keep silence all these fourteen years,
When, on this letter, which he never wrote
The tears were your tears?

CYRANO

[*holding out the letter to her*].

The bloodstains were his.

ROXANE.

Why, then, that noble silence,—kept so long—
Broken to-day for the first time—why?

CYRANO.

Why? . . .

[LE BRET *and* RAGUENEAU *enter running.*]

SCENE VI

The SAME. LE BRET *and* RAGUENEAU.

LE BRET.

What madness! Here? I knew it well!

CYRANO

[*smiling and sitting up*].

What now?

LE BRET.

He has brought his death by coming, Madame.

ROXANE.

God!
Ah then! that faintness of a moment since . . .?

CYRANO.

Why, true! It interrupted the 'Gazette':
. . . Saturday, twenty-sixth, at dinner-time,
Assassination of De Bergerac.

[*He takes off his hat; they see his head bandaged.*]

ROXANE.

What says he? Cyrano!—His head all bound!
Ah, what has chanced? How?—Who? . . .

CYRANO.

'To be struck down,
Pierced by a sword i' the heart, from a hero's hand!'
That I had dreamed. O mockery of Fate!
—Killed, I! of all men—in an ambuscade!
Struck from behind, and by a lackey's hand!
'Tis very well. I am foiled, foiled in all,
Even in my death.

RAGUENEAU.

Ah, Monsieur! . . .

CYRANO

[*holding out his hand to him*].

Ragueneau,
Weep not so bitterly! . . . What do you now,
Old comrade?

RAGUENEAU

[*amid his tears*].

. . . Trim the lights for Molière's stage.

CYRANO.

Molière!

RAGUENEAU.

Yes, but I shall leave to-morrow.
I cannot bear it!—Yesterday, they played
Scapin—I saw he'd thieved a scene from you!

LE BRET.

What! a whole scene?

RAGUENEAU.

Oh yes, indeed, Monsieur,
The famous one, 'Que Diable allait-il faire?'

LE BRET.

Molière has stolen that?

CYRANO.

Tut! He did well! . . .
[*To* RAGUENEAU.]
How went the scene? It told—I think it told?

RAGUENEAU
[*sobbing*].
Ah! how they laughed!

CYRANO.

Look you, it was my life
To be the prompter every one forgets!
[*To* ROXANE.]
That night when 'neath your window Christian spoke
—Under your balcony, you remember? Well!
There was the allegory of my whole life:
I, in the shadow, at the ladder's foot,
While others lightly mount to Love and Fame!
Just! very just! Here on the threshold drear
Of death, I pay my tribute with the rest,
To Molière's genius,—Christian's fair face!

[*The chapel-bell chimes. The* NUNS *are seen passing down the alley at the back, to say their office.*]

Let them go pray, go pray, when the bell rings

ROXANE

[*rising and calling*].

Sister! Sister!

CYRANO

[*holding her fast*].

Call no one. Leave me not;
When you come back, I should be gone for aye.
[*The* NUNS *have all entered the chapel. The organ sounds.*]
I was somewhat fain for music—hark! 'tis come.

ROXANE.

Live, for I love you!

CYRANO.

No! In fairy-tales
When to the ill-starred Prince the lady says
'I love you!' all his ugliness fades fast—
But I remain the same, up to the last!

ROXANE.

I have marred your life—I, I!

CYRANO.

You blessed my life!
Never on me had rested woman's love.
My mother even could not find me fair;
I had no sister; and, when grown a man,
I feared the mistress who would mock at me.
But I have had your friendship—grace to you
A woman's charm has passed across my path.

LE BRET

[*pointing to the moon, which is seen between the trees*].

Your other lady-love is come.

CYRANO

[*smiling*].

I see.

ROXANE.

I loved but once, yet twice I lose my love!

CYRANO.

Hark you, Le Bret! I soon shall reach the moon.
To-night, alone, with no projectile's aid! . . .

LE BRET.

What are you saying!

CYRANO.

I tell you, it is there,
There, that they send me for my Paradise,
There I shall find at last the souls I love,
In exile,—Galileo—Socrates!

LE BRET

[*rebelliously*].

No, no! It is too clumsy, too unjust!
So great a heart! So great a poet! Die
Like this? what, die . . .?

CYRANO

Hark to Le Bret, who scolds.

LE BRET

[*weeping*].

Dear friend . . .

CYRANO

[*starting up, his eyes wild*].

What ho! Cadets of Gascony!
The elemental mass—ah yes! the *hic* . . .

LE BRET.

His science still—he raves!

CYRANO.

Copernicus
Said . . .

ROXANE.

Oh!

CYRANO.

Mais que diable allait-il faire,
Mais que diable allait-il faire dans cette galère? . . .

Philosopher, metaphysician,
Rhymer, brawler, and musician,
Famed for his lunar expedition,
And the unnumbered duels he fought,—
And lover also,—by interposition!—
Here lies Hercule Savinien
De Cyrano de Bergerac.
Who was everything, yet was nought.

I cry you pardon, but I may not stay;
See, the moon-ray that comes to call me hence!

[*He has fallen back in his chair; the sobs of* ROXANE *recall him to reality; he looks long at her, and, touching her veil.*]

I would not bid you mourn less faithfully

That good, brave Christian: I would only ask
That when my body shall be cold in clay
You wear those sable mourning weeds for two,
And mourn a while for me, in mourning him.

ROXANE.

I swear it you! . . .

CYRANO

[*shivering violently, then suddenly rising*].

Not there! what, seated?—no!

[*They spring towards him.*]

Let no one hold me up—

[*He props himself against the tree.*]

Only the tree!

[*Silence.*]

It comes. E'en now my feet have turned to stone,
My hands are gloved with lead!

[*He stands erect.*]

But since Death comes,
I meet him still afoot,

[*He draws his sword.*]

And sword in hand!

LE BRET.

Cyrano!

ROXANE

[*half fainting*].

Cyrano!

[*All shrink back in terror.*]

CYRANO.

Why, I well believe
He dares to mock my nose? Ho! insolent!

[*He raises his sword.*]

What say you? It is useless? Ay, I know!
But who fights ever hoping for success?
I fought for lost cause, and for fruitless quest!
You there, who are you!—You are thousands! **Ah**!
I know you now, old enemies of mine!
Falsehood!

[*He strikes in the air with his sword.*]

Have at you! Ha! and Compromise!
Prejudice, Treachery! . . .

[*He strikes.*]

Surrender, I?
Parley? No, never! You too, Folly,—you?
I know that you will lay me low at last;
Let be! Yet I fall fighting, fighting still!

[*He makes passes in the air, and stops, breathless.*]

You strip from me the laurel and the rose!
Take all! Despite you there is yet one thing
I hold against you all, and when, to-night,
I enter Christ's fair courts, and, lowly bowed,
Sweep with doffed casque the heavens' threshold blue,
One thing is left, that, void of stain or smutch,
I bear away despite you.

[*He springs forward, his sword raised; it falls from his hand; he staggers, falls back into the arms of* LE BRET *and* RAGUENEAU.]

ROXANE

[bending over him and kissing his forehead].

'Tis? . . .

CYRANO

[opening his eyes, recognising her, and smiling].

My *panache*.

CURTAIN.

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